

AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF A *STRING AROUND AUTUMN* BY

TORU TAKEMITSU

by

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

I first encountered Toru Takemitsu's music in 2012 when my trio performed his *And then I knew 'twas wind* for flute, viola, and harp (1992). His music's uniquely expressivity tone and emotional depth immediately touched and appealed to me as both performer and listener. This piece inspired me to look into his other compositions, including *A String around Autumn* for solo viola and orchestra (1989). After listening to this piece, my admiration of Takemitsu deepened. Certain qualities of his music, such as the orchestration, reminded me of works by Claude Debussy. While merely a first impression, this comparison to Debussy provided a starting point for exploring the influences on and musical philosophy of Takemitsu. This document will use in-depth analysis to demonstrate the influences of World War II, Japanese philosophy, and Western compositional styles (especially of Debussy) on *A String Around Autumn*.

## 1.1 Toru Takemitsu

Toru Takemitsu (October 8, 1930—February 20, 1996) was born in Japan. He was one of the first Japanese composers to gain an international reputation. His works include contemporary compositions for concert halls and film scores. Despite his Japanese heritage, his compositional techniques were influenced mostly by Western composers such as Claude Debussy and Olivier Messiaen. He was capable of mastering techniques of these giants while also incorporating his own philosophical aesthetic, influenced by Japanese traditional culture, to create his own unique style. He first received international recognition for his concert works in 1959 from Igor Stravinsky, who heard and praised

Takemitsu's *Requiem* for strings (1957) during his visit to Japan.<sup>1</sup> In 1958, Takemitsu was awarded First Prize for his piece *Le Son-calligraphie I* (1958) at the contemporary music festival in Karuizawa. In 1959, his *Le Son-calligraphie II* (1958) was performed in Chicago by the Pro Musica ensemble conducted by Thor Johnson. This concert marked the first performance of Takemitsu's music in the United States.<sup>2</sup> After this performance, Takemitsu's music started receiving international attention and a resulting increase in commissions for a variety of occasions.<sup>3</sup> This was a big achievement for him, as he was a Japanese composer who at the time purposefully avoided using any elements of Japanese traditional music and sought inclusion in the Western music scene. This complicated relationship between himself and his native culture resulted from his experiences growing up.

A month after Takemitsu was born, he and his parents moved to Dalian, China. While in China, Takemitsu was exposed to American popular music through the American movies his family enjoyed watching and the jazz recordings that his father often played for him.<sup>4</sup> At the age of seven, he returned to Japan by himself to start elementary school and lived with his aunt, who was a koto player.<sup>5</sup> The genre of music in his surroundings changed drastically to mainly traditional Japanese music. As a result of his years living in China and listening to Western music, Takemitsu felt like an outsider to Japan and Japanese music.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> James Siddons, *Toru Takemitsu: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001), 8-9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>3</sup> Toru Takemitsu, Tania Cronin and Hilary Tann, "Afterward," *Perspectives of New Music* Vol. 27, No. 2 (Summer, 1989): 205-207.

<sup>4</sup> Siddons, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Siddons, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Alan Hall, *Enter the Garden: A Portrait of Toru Takemitsu*. Falling Tree production for BBC Radio 3, 2008.



The Second World War broke out when Takemitsu was only nine years old. He was still able to finish elementary school and start middle school despite the war. But during the last year of the war, the fourteen-year-old Takemitsu was forced to drop out of school and was sent to a youth regiment located at a remote food-storage depot in Saitama Prefecture.<sup>7</sup> Since Western music was banned in Japan during the war, the only kinds of music he was able to listen to were traditional Japanese music and military and patriotic songs. Takemitsu once recalled this period of time during his childhood, saying “I heard traditional Japanese music around me all the time. For some reason, it never really appealed to me, never moved me. Later, hearing traditional Japanese music always recalled the bitter memories of the war.”<sup>8</sup>

One musical incident during his military service left a substantial impact on Takemitsu’s musical life. He described the memory himself in the film *Music for the Movies: Toru Takemitsu* (1994), directed by Charlotte Zwerin:

Toward the end of the war, I was working alongside soldiers in the mountains, helping to build a food-distribution base. The only songs we could sing were army songs...Military songs. There was almost no music. But one day, it was a secret. A soldier, a student draftee, played a record of a chanson, a French chanson.<sup>9,10</sup> I was so moved, listening to that song. I decided right then, if this war ended, somehow, I would make music.

Takemitsu had always favored Western popular music (especially jazz and American movie music) from his early years living with his parents in China. The French chanson he heard in the regiment further confirmed his passion for music and inspired him to choose music as his lifetime career. Nevertheless, he never received any formal

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<sup>7</sup> Siddons, 2.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Burt, *The Music of Tōru Takemitsu* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 23.

<sup>9</sup> Noriko Ohtake, *Creative Sources for the Music of Toru Takemitsu* (Aldershot, UK: Scholar Press Aldershot, 1993), 6.

<sup>10</sup> The French chanson mentioned here was a Josephine Baker recording of “Parles-moi de l’amour.”

music training and was mostly self-taught. He gained his musical knowledge from whatever resources he could acquire from his surroundings, such as musical scores and recordings of different genres of Western music. After the war ended, he did not continue with school, but instead took a job at an American PX ('post exchange,' or recreational facility) in Yokohama in 1946.<sup>11</sup> He learned about American popular songs, dances, and other kinds of Western music, including classical music, through the records he was in charge of playing in the dance hall at work. He was also able to listen to Western music through the Armed Forces Radio Station set up by the US army during a period of time when he was ill and had to spend his days resting in bed.<sup>12</sup> In addition, he often had the opportunity to visit the Center for Information and Education in Tokyo, built by the US government, and look at musical scores.<sup>13</sup> He would use the piano in the dance hall or draw a paper keyboard to study music. Later on when he no longer worked at the American PX, he received help from his friends to rent a piano to compose his early pieces and study scores of Debussy, Ravel, Fauré, and Messiaen.<sup>14</sup>

In 1948, Takemitsu sought compositional instruction from Yasuji Kiyose (1900-1981), one of the leading composers in Japan at the time and an advocate of the music of Debussy, Fauré, and Franck.<sup>15</sup> Kiyose did not leave much impact on Takemitsu's compositional style; however, through his connection with Kiyose, Takemitsu was able to participate in the contemporary music scene in Japan and to meet Fumio Hayasaka (1914-1955), a Japanese composer of classical music and film scores.<sup>16</sup> Hayasaka was the

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<sup>11</sup> Siddons, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Burt, 23.

<sup>13</sup> Takemitsu, "*Afterword*," 207.

<sup>14</sup> Siddons, 3.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>16</sup> Siddons, 4.

one who led Takemitsu into the world of film music and also let Takemitsu copy parts for his film scores. When Hayasaka suddenly passed away in 1955, and Takemitsu himself was also suffering from severe illness, he composed the *Requiem* for strings (1957) to mourn Hayasaka's death and his own health condition.<sup>17</sup>

Takemitsu's fascination with Western music and negative attitude towards traditional Japanese music resulted in his early compositions such as *Romance* for piano (1948-1949) and *Lento in Due Movimenti* for piano (1950). These pieces are greatly influenced by Western composers such as Debussy, Messiaen, Webern, and Berg, as well as modal American jazz. They contain no trace of elements from traditional Japanese music.<sup>18</sup> Throughout the 1950s, Takemitsu's compositions fluctuated through different styles such as concrete music, electronic music, and serial music (Figure 1.1).<sup>19</sup>

Figure 1.1 Burt's analysis of Takemitsu's *Masque I*, a composition that incorporates serial derivation.

Ex. 19 *Masque I*, bars 18–20

The musical score for Ex. 19, *Masque I*, bars 18–20, is presented in two staves. The top staff is marked 'P' (Piano) and the bottom staff is marked 'R' (Right Hand). The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers bars 18 to 11, and the second system covers bars 12 to 12. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings (p, mf, pp, molto, sub. pp). The score is annotated with numbers 0 through 12, indicating specific points of serial derivation. The first system is marked with 'P' and 'R' at the beginning, and the second system is marked with 'P' and 'R' at the beginning. The score is a complex serial derivation structure with various dynamics and articulations.

After years of making music solely Western in style, Takemitsu eventually rediscovered the beauty of traditional Japanese music.<sup>21</sup> The turning point happened one

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>18</sup> Burt, 26.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>20</sup> Burt, 63.

day when he saw a performance of *bunraku* (Japanese puppet theater). He described the impact brought by the experience in his essay “Confronting Silence”:

Because of World War II, the dislike of things Japanese continued for some time and was not easily wiped out. Indeed, I started out as a composer by denying any ‘Japaneseness.’ For someone who began by doubting traditional values, my first impression of Japanese music was unusually strong. The *gidayu*<sup>22</sup> of the *bunraku* theater that I happened to hear—especially the intensity of the melodies and the rhythm of the *futozao*<sup>23</sup>—made me aware of a completely different world of music.<sup>24</sup>

Another turning point occurred in 1964 when Takemitsu met John Cage at the San Francisco Tape Music Center while attending the electronic music festival.<sup>25</sup> The friendship between the two composers greatly influenced Takemitsu in many ways.

Takemitsu thought that Cage’s philosophy of “insides of sounds” showed the true essence of music:

John Cage speaks of the ‘insides of sounds.’ This may seem like mysterious talk, but he is only suggesting that we include all kinds of vibrations in what we accept as a musical sound. We tend to grasp music within the confines of the smothering superficial conventions of composed music. In the midst of all this the naïve and basic act of the human being, listening, has been forgotten. Music is something to be listened to, not explained. John Cage is trying to reconfirm the significance of the original act. *Listening* to his sounds is what John Cage’s music really is. That is what any music is.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ohtake, 8.

<sup>22</sup> A style of chanting with shamisen (a traditional Japanese three-stringed lute with a square body, played with a large plectrum) developed by Takemoto Gidayu (1651 - 1714).

<sup>23</sup> Special shamisen used for *gidayu*.

<sup>24</sup> Toru Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence* (Berkeley, Calif.: Fallen Leaf Press, 1995), 109.

<sup>25</sup> Siddons, 9.

<sup>26</sup> Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 65.

Figure 1.2 John Cage with Toru Takemitsu in Japan, 1982.<sup>27</sup>



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Figure 1.3 Takemitsu and the biwa player, Kinshi Tsuruta, who premiered Takemitsu's *November Steps* with the New York Philharmonic in 1967.<sup>28</sup>



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<sup>27</sup> Asaka Takemitsu, *A Memoir of Toru Takemitsu*, (iUniverse, Inc., Bloomington, 2010), 89.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

In addition, Cage was influenced by Zen through the Zen master Daisetsu Suzuki. Cage's interest in Zen deeply inspired Takemitsu to further explore the value of his native culture.<sup>29</sup> Takemitsu expressed his gratitude towards Cage, saying, "In my life, for a long period I struggled to avoid being "Japanese," to avoid "Japanese" qualities. It was largely through my contact with John Cage that I came to recognize the value of my own tradition."<sup>30</sup>

The reconciliation with traditional Japanese culture and music opened up a variety of possibilities for Takemitsu's composition and influenced his philosophical approach to his music. For instance, he incorporated traditional Japanese instruments in works such as *Eclipse* for biwa and shakuhachi<sup>31</sup> (1966) and *November Steps* for biwa, shakuhachi and orchestra (1967), commissioned by the New York Philharmonic for the orchestra's 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary.<sup>32</sup>

Most importantly, through his exploration of traditional Japanese culture, Takemitsu was inspired by the traditional concept of *Ma* and he gradually developed his own philosophy of "stream of sound." *Ma* in Japanese means "in between," and in Japanese performance art and music, it is the aesthetic concept of time and space.<sup>33</sup> But *Ma* is a complex word for Takemitsu. He comments on the word saying, "the concept of *Ma* is one special form of recognition in the universe, in the cosmos. *Ma* is the big universe, and man is very little, small. We feel the big space—*Ma*. This is most primary.

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<sup>29</sup> Toru Takemitsu, "Contemporary Music in Japan," Perspectives of New Music, vol. 27, no. 2 (Summer 1989), 199.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Biwa is a Japanese short-necked fretted lute and shakuhachi a Japanese end-blown flute.

<sup>32</sup> Ohtake, 56.

<sup>33</sup> Siddons, 16.



Man is part of nature—no less, no more.”<sup>34</sup> I argue that his “stream of sound” philosophy can be seen as the combination of influences from John Cage’s “insides of sounds” and *Ma*: music should be inseparable from daily life and it is the sound that constantly flows in a human being’s surroundings. This kind of philosophical approach towards the sense of time can be seen in *A String Around Autumn* and will be further discussed in chapter 4.

Another inspiration from Japanese culture is the Japanese garden (Figure 1.5).

Takemitsu expressed his love for the Japanese garden in his writing:

I love gardens. They do not reject people. There one can walk freely, pause to view the entire garden, or gaze at a single tree. Plants, rocks, and sand show changes, constant changes.<sup>35</sup>

Figure 1.4 A Japanese garden in Nanzen-In, a small temple in Kyoto, Japan.<sup>36</sup>



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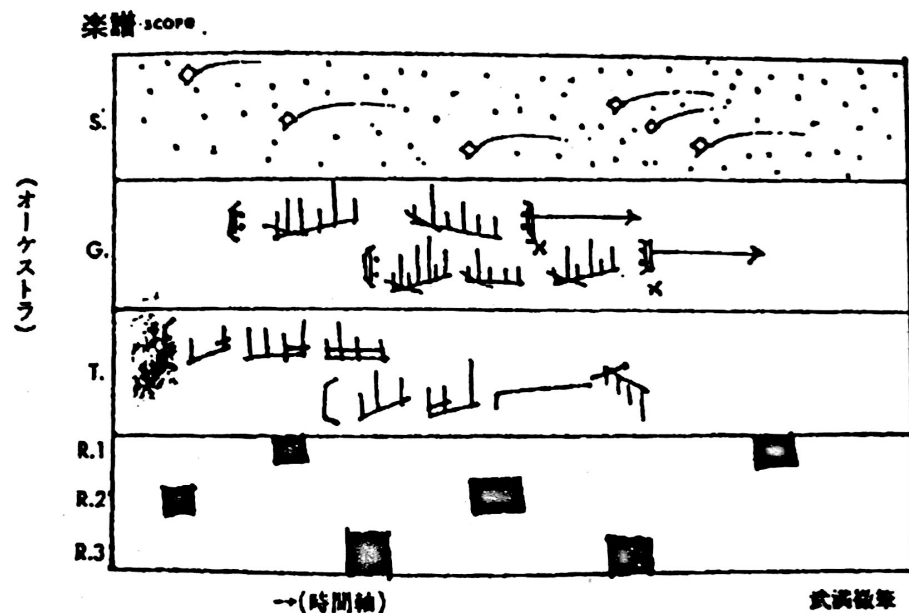
<sup>34</sup> Takemitsu, *Afterword*, 10.

<sup>35</sup> Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 95.

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/gardenstovisit/10610071/Beautiful-Japanese-Zen-gardens-in-pics.html?frame=2808564>

He composed his *Arc* for piano and orchestra Part I (1963-1966) and Part II (1964-1966) based on this concept. In this piece, he assigned the solo pianist the role of an observer wandering in the garden, and he divided the orchestra into four groups: woodwinds, strings, brass, and percussion, to represent different elements from the garden.<sup>37</sup> Figure 1.5 shows the structure of the piece, drawn by Takemitsu, in which the top category represents sand and earth, the second category grass and flowers, the third category trees, and the bottom category rocks.<sup>38</sup>

Figure 1.5 The structure of *Arc* as drawn by Takemitsu.<sup>39</sup>



After rediscovering his native culture, Takemitsu's compositional style went from being completely Western to a style that embraces both Eastern and Western influences. The Western influences can be seen in his compositional techniques of orchestration and use of pitch collections, while Eastern elements are reflected mainly in his philosophical

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 95.

<sup>39</sup> Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 95.



thinking towards the essence of his music. Even though he sometimes used traditional Japanese instruments in his compositions, he only treated the instruments as ways to create different sound effects. Siddons commented that “while the instruments are traditional Japanese, the music Takemitsu wrote for them is grounded in the European avant-garde of the 1960s.”<sup>40</sup>

This European avant-garde style that Takemitsu adopted in the 1960s was notably dry and percussive. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, Takemitsu’s compositions became more nostalgic and slow in style.<sup>41</sup> *A String Around Autumn* was composed during this period and is a perfect example of that style, blended with the influences of Debussy, Messiaen, jazz, and the concept of Japanese Ma.

## **1.2 The general background of *A String Around Autumn***

*A String Around Autumn* for viola and orchestra (1989) was commissioned by the Festival d’Automne à Paris (Paris Autumn Festival) for the bicentenary of the French Revolution.<sup>42</sup> The piece was premiered at the festival on November 29 and 30, 1989, by violist Nobuko Imai, with Kent Nagano conducting the Orchestre de Paris.<sup>43</sup> Takemitsu dedicated this piece to the people of France, “among whom are Claude Debussy and Olivier Messiaen, who have given deep influence to my music.”<sup>44</sup>

Takemitsu named his compositions with poetic titles, another result of his World War II experiences. In addition to gradually developing his taste for music he also

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<sup>40</sup> Siddons, 12.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.festival-automne.com/en/about-us>. Founded in 1972, Festival d’Automne à Paris is a festival of contemporary arts that embraces and combines different art forms.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

discovered his love for languages and literature during the war. He was able to learn English while working at the American PX and taught himself some French because of the French chanson he heard in the regiment.<sup>45</sup> Later in his life, he became friends with important poets and writers such as Kenzaburo Oe (recipient of the 1992 Nobel Prize in Literature) and Shuzo Takiguchi.<sup>46</sup> He was also familiar with the work of other writers such as Shuntaro Tanikawa and Makoto Ooka. The relationship between Takemitsu and these writers, and his interest in their work, inspired and provided the titles for Takemitsu's compositions. The title of *A String Around Autumn* is taken from a short poem of the same name by Makoto Ooka, published in his *Selected Poems, 1952-1980* (Figure 1.6): "Sink don't sing. / Be simply silent. / Be simple: a string to wind around / Autumn."

Takemitsu selected words from this poem for his title because of their symbolic meaning. The 'string' represents the solo viola or the format of the piece (a piece for solo viola and the orchestra), and 'Autumn' can be seen as related to the name of the festival.

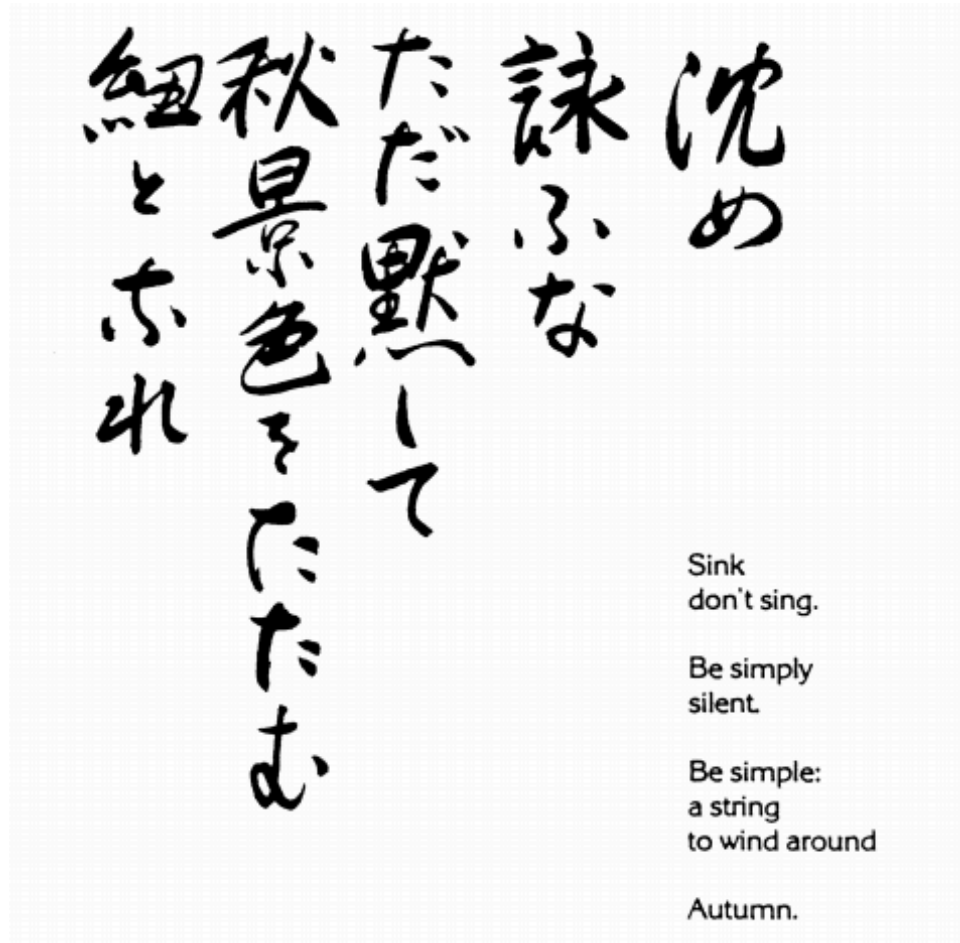
Takemitsu's musical upbringing and his inspirations turned him into one of the twentieth century's most respected composers. Chapters 2 through 4 will take a detailed look at *A String Around Autumn* in terms of form, pitch collection, orchestration, and other aspects of his music that have not been systematically analyzed by other scholars.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 14.

Figure 1.6



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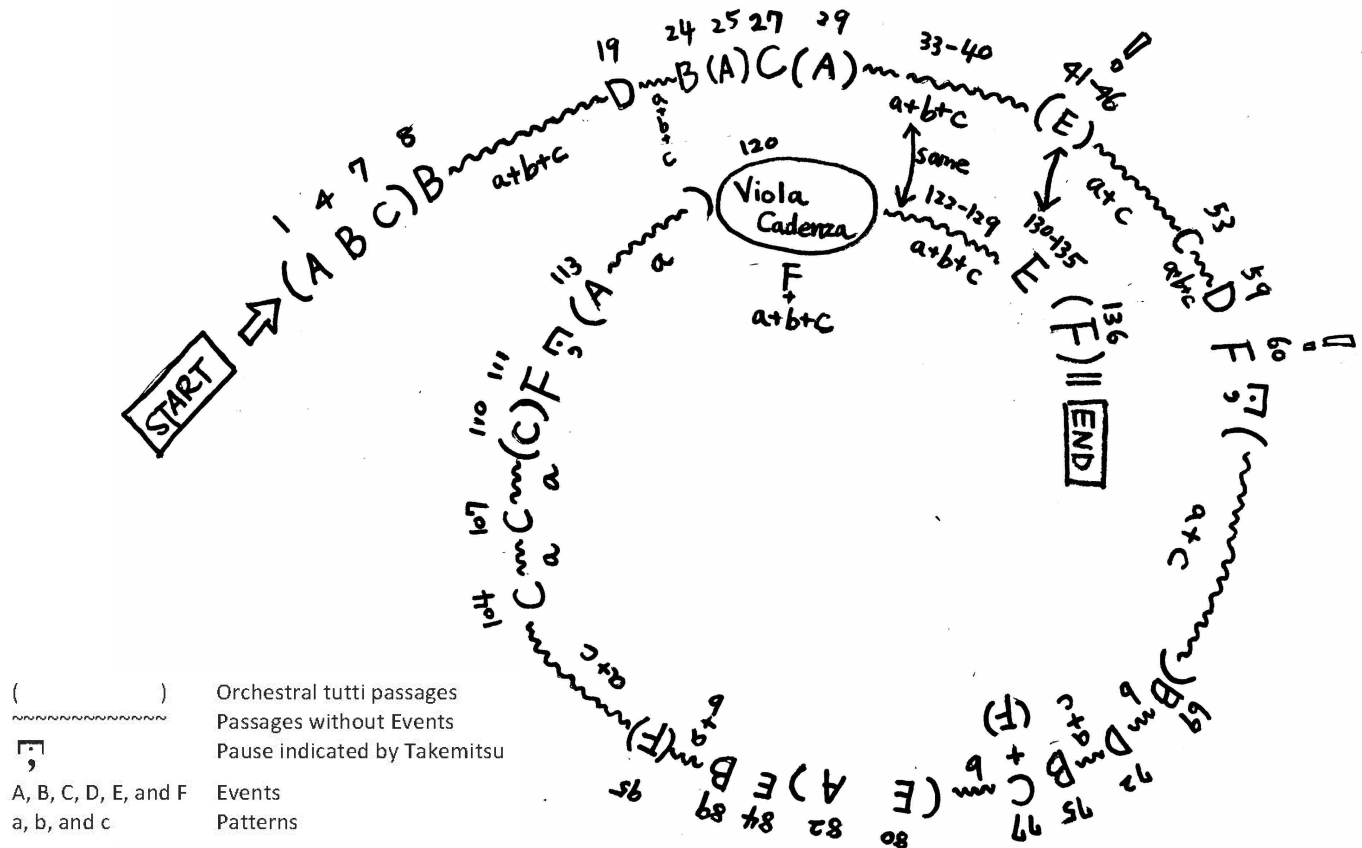
<sup>47</sup> *A String Around Autumn: Selected Poems, 1952-1980* by Ōoka Makoto; Takako Lento; Onuma Tadayoshi, Review by: Janine Beichman, *The Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Nov., 1983), pp. 234-239, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/489119>

## Chapter 2: Formal Analysis of *A String Around Autumn*

*A String Around Autumn* is a one-movement piece, and the duration is about 18 minutes. Although the title does not indicate it is a viola concerto, the piece is indeed written for solo viola and full-size orchestra. Therefore, like most concertos, there is a viola cadenza towards the end of the piece. The form of the piece contains sections which are clearly divided by different indications, such as changes of tempo, endings of large phrases, indicated pauses, or the appearances of different melodies. In my personal approach toward understanding the formal structure, I drew a spiral form to describe the piece (see Diagram 2.1). Although the piece is made up of small, discrete sections, dominant melodies (which I call “events” in my analysis) occur repeatedly throughout and shape the piece as a whole.

In Diagram 2.1, the upper case letters represent the major events happening in the piece, and the lower case letters are the smaller patterns that help shape major events and other passages. The passages indicated by “~~~~~” represent passages that do not have major events but are still shaped by patterns. The letters in parentheses show the orchestral tutti passages. In order to further understand the diagram, it is necessary to explain the patterns and events in depth.

Diagram 2.1



## 2.1 The basic patterns

Takemitsu's melodies are designed in a highly individual way. They are generally short in length, with the longest one lasting merely three measures, and they are shaped by small musical gestures in an intriguing manner. These small musical gestures are what I mean by "patterns." There are three different kinds of patterns in this piece, and they are not only active in terms of creating a phrase arch, but are sometimes interwoven in the passages between the occurrences of the dominant melodies. When considering the patterns or, later on, the events, it is necessary to understand the important role played by pitch collections. In this chapter, I will briefly talk about some of the pitch collections

Takemitsu uses in this piece, and I will discuss the matter in more detail in the next chapter.

### 2.1.1 Pattern A

Pattern A is assigned to a particular melodic contour created by the alternation of ascending and descending intervals. This shape of melody is identified by Burt as one of Takemitsu's signature melodic designs and a result of Messiaen's influence.<sup>1</sup> It can be found in several of Takemitsu's works, such as *To the Edge of Dream* (1983) and *Vers, l'arc-en-ciel, Palma* (1984). Burt used Takemitsu's *Folios* for solo guitar (1974) as an example, writing that

in *Folios* there is the suggestion of a kind of 'homage' to a second Western master (Messiaen)...The gesture in question takes the form of a stock melodic formula found in several Takemitsu works: a kind of 'zig-zag' pattern formed by the alternation of ascending and descending intervals...It is possible that this type of melodic pattern may have been suggested to Takemitsu from Messiaen's *Technique*, which the French composer claims to have derived from *Boris Godunov*.<sup>2</sup>

Pattern A, which we can now refer to as the 'zig-zag' pattern, is the essential element that shapes the melodies in *A String Around Autumn*. Example 2.1.1 shows the specific contour of melodies created by Pattern A.

Example 2.1.1 Pattern A, the 'zig-zag' pattern

m. 24

m. 25

<sup>1</sup> Takemitsu was fond of music by French composers such as Debussy, Franck, Fauré, and Messiaen through out his career, and these composers had great influence in Takemitsu's composition style.

<sup>2</sup> Burt, 153-154.

Pattern A provides the melodic lines a sense of direction in either upward or downward motion. Example 2.1.1 shows the motion going upwards and Example 2.1.2 shows the passage where Pattern A is presented in both the melodic line and accompaniment but in a reversed motion.

Example 2.1.2 mm. 12-16

Original Pattern A

**B**

Pattern A reversed

Pattern A not only shapes the melody but also allows the melody to quickly shift registers. The passage in Example 2.1.3 shows how Pattern A brings the melody to a higher register in a short amount of time.

### Example 2.1.3 Pattern A in mm. 103-106

### 2.1.2 Pattern B

Pattern B is assigned to a short phrase that contains intervals of a second, fourth, and sixth. It begins with an ascending major second, a descending perfect fourth, an ascending major sixth, and an ascending major second,  $[+2, -5, +9, +2]^3$  (Example 2.1.4).

### Example 2.1.4 Pattern B in m. 11

Sometimes the major sixth is replaced by a minor sixth, such as in the passage in Example 2.1.5, and the alteration of the interval makes the motive a pentatonic collection.

Pattern B often appears in the pentatonic version of the motive, as in Example 2.1.5, and

<sup>3</sup> Joseph N. Straus, *Introduction to Post-tonal Theory*. 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2005), 8. The concept of ordered pitch intervals introduced by Joseph Straus' *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory* is used to describe the contour of the melody: "A pitch interval is simply the distance between two pitches, measured by the number of semitones between them. A pitch interval is created when we move from pitch to pitch in pitch space. Sometimes we will be concerned about the direction of the interval, whether ascending or descending. In that case, the number will be preceded by either a plus sign (to indicate an ascending interval) or a minus sign (to indicate a descending interval). Intervals with a plus or minus sign are called directed or ordered intervals."



thus creates a number of pentatonic passages. Despite the alteration of the quality of the intervals, the contour of the motive remains strictly the same.

Example 2.1.5 Pattern B in m. 16

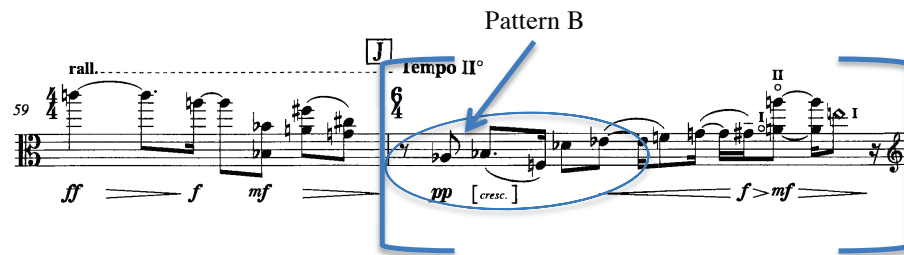
Pattern B appears very often in the melodies of *A String Around Autumn*. It can be a short melodic gesture, as in Example 2.1.4 and 2.1.5, or it can appear as a longer phrase by connecting a series of Pattern B's back to back. For example, in measure 71, Pattern B is repeated many times, and each time is a continuation of the previous appearance. The ascending second at the end of each unit becomes the ascending second in the beginning of the next appearance (Example 2.1.6).

Example 2.1.6 A series of Pattern B in m. 71

Pattern B proves its importance not just through abundant appearances but by later on turning into one of the dominant melodies (see Example 2.1.7). Regarding Takemitsu's thematic development, Burt notes that the phrases in Takemitsu's *Distance de Fée* (1951, revised 1989) are "artfully constructed out of a number of recurrent smaller

motifs, and that the manner in which these are reconstituted to provide new material reveals the workings of a considerable compositional discipline.”<sup>4</sup> The procedure of Pattern B turning into a main melody is also an example of this kind of thematic process.

Example 2.1.7 A dominant melody initiated by Pattern B



### 2.1.3 Pattern C

Pattern C is assigned to a specific unordered three-note gesture, where, if lined up to create the smallest intervals possible, the notes would make a minor second and a minor third. For instance, if we have a set of notes which are F, F<sup>♯</sup>, and A, we can identify that these three notes make up Pattern C because F and F<sup>♯</sup> make a minor second, and F<sup>♯</sup> and A make a minor third. The notes can be arranged in a different order or spelled with their enharmonic equivalents.<sup>5</sup> Pattern C is regarded as one of Takemitsu’s musical signatures. Not only does it appear frequently in *A String Around Autumn*, it also shows up in other compositions such as *Hika* (1966) for violin and piano and *And then I knew ‘twas wind* for harp, viola, and flute.<sup>6</sup> The following examples from *A String Around Autumn* show how the pattern is presented within a variety of contexts.

<sup>4</sup> Burt, 37.

<sup>5</sup> In the language of pitch-class set theory, this cell would be called (014).

<sup>6</sup> Burt, 223.

Even at the very beginning of the piece, Pattern C appears several times: the first occurrence is the first three notes of the piece, played by the oboe d'amore and the first horn. A couple of measures later, the pattern is found at the end of the solo viola melody (Example 2.1.8 and 2.1.9).

Example 2.1.8 Pattern C in m.1

Example 2.1.9 Pattern C in m. 6

In Example 2.1.8, the first three notes are  $[C\sharp, A, B\flat]$ . In order to examine whether the set is a Pattern C, we need to consider rearranging the order of the notes to make the smallest intervals between the notes and their enharmonic equivalencies. Therefore, we rearrange the set as  $[A, B\flat, C\sharp]$ , and then replace the  $C\sharp$  with  $D\flat$ , so we get a minor second between the first two notes and a minor third between the other two. In Example 2.1.9, the last three notes,  $[A, F, A\flat]$ , can be rearranged as  $[F, A\flat,$

A $\flat$ ]. The interval contents here are a minor third and a minor second, which also make this set a Pattern C. The voicing of the motive in this example (with a minor sixth between the first two notes and a minor third between the last two) is very common in *A String Around Autumn*, and it usually punctuates the end of a phrase.

Example 2.1.10 Pattern C in mm. 8-11

Example 2.1.10 shows Pattern C in mm. 8-11. The score is in 4/4 time, marked *poco riten.* with a double bar line. The first system (mm. 8-9) features a melodic line with notes circled in blue, labeled with interval sets [B, G, B $\flat$ ] and [F, C $\sharp$ , E]. The second system (mm. 10-11) continues the pattern with similar blue circles and interval labels. Dynamics include *pp*, *mf*, *p*, and *f*. A *poco* marking is also present.

Example 2.1.11 Pattern C in mm. 33-35

Example 2.1.11 shows Pattern C in mm. 33-35. The score is in 4/4 time, marked *Tempo I°*. The first system (mm. 33-34) features a melodic line with notes circled in blue, labeled with interval sets [C $\sharp$ , A, C $\sharp$ ] and [D, B $\flat$ , C $\sharp$ ]. The second system (mm. 35) continues the pattern with similar blue circles and interval labels. Dynamics include *p*, *mf*, and *f*. A *poco* marking is also present.

Example 2.1.12 Pattern C in mm. 83-87

Example 2.1.12 shows Pattern C in mm. 83-87. The score is in 4/4 time, marked *Tempo I°* and *[con sord.]*. The first system (mm. 83-84) features a melodic line with notes circled in blue, labeled with interval sets [C, B, G $\sharp$ ] and [C, B, G $\sharp$ ]. The second system (mm. 85-87) continues the pattern with similar blue circles and interval labels. Dynamics include *p*, *mf*, and *f*. A *poco* marking is also present.

Example 2.1.10 shows Pattern C appearing with this particular voicing two times in the solo viola's first entrance. The passage in Example 2.1.11 provides an example of Pattern C, with that same voicing, being used as a phrase's ending gesture. Example 2.1.12 shows that Pattern C generates the majority of the main melodic line.

Though often used linearly, Pattern C is also sometimes used as vertical chords, such as in measure 68 (Example 2.1.13)

Example 2.1.13 Pattern C as chords in m. 68

67

[C, D  $\flat$ , A] [G $\sharp$ , A, F] [D, E  $\flat$ , B]

*p* *mf* *pp*

## 2.2 The events

The events are the dominant melodies in *A String Around Autumn*. Their recurrences help create the piece's trajectory and guide listeners through the work's sound world. Therefore, each event happens at least twice in the piece, which can be seen in Diagram 2.1. The events are shaped differently from one another. The patterns create a variety of contours for the events, and the combinations of rhythms provide different movements. My analysis includes six prominent events in the piece: A, B, C, D, E, and F.

### 2.2.1 Event A

Event A is the two-bar gesture in the orchestra introduction that begins the entire piece and appears only in the orchestra tutti passages throughout the work. The melody of this passage is based on the interval of a major third. The first four notes of the melody begin with a descending major third and an ascending major third. The melody then continues by a succession of ascending major thirds, which creates a passage of arpeggiated augmented chords. The first three notes of the event form a Pattern C. The entire event is from Messiaen's third mode of limited transposition<sup>7</sup> which remains the same for all of the appearances.

### Example 2.2.1 Event A in m. 1

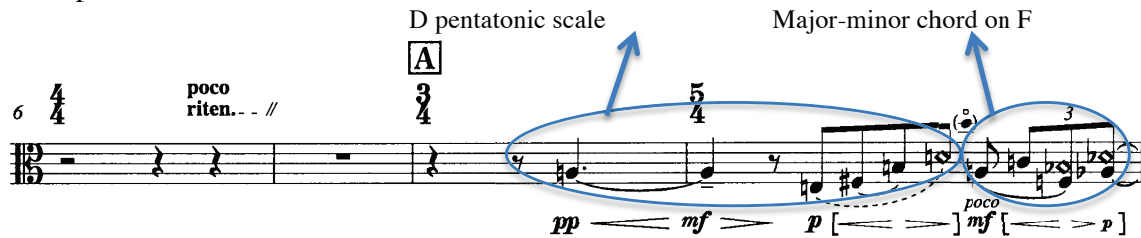
The rhythmic profile begins with a pattern of “long, short, short, long,” and the augmented passage is fast-paced. The metrical orientations of Event A’s appearances are slightly different. Sometimes the theme starts on the first beat of the measure, but sometimes it begins on the off-beat. Event A’s rhythmic variety shows that Takemitsu likes to play with rests and duration of the notes to make the listener lose the sense of time.

<sup>7</sup> See chapter 3.

## 2.2.2 Event B

Event B emerges out of Event A in the piece's first main melody. This melody first appears in the orchestra introduction and then is played as the opening melody in the solo viola's first entry. This event can be regarded as a symbol representing the 'string' from the title of the piece. As Anthony Burton mentioned in the liner notes of the recording, "In his own account of the work, Takemitsu says that he has found a musical equivalent of the "string" of the poem in an irregular eight-note scale, which generates the work's melodic material."<sup>8</sup>

Example 2.2.2 Event B



Example 2.2.2 is an example of Event B. As seen in the melody, the "irregular" eight-note scale consists of notes E, F $\sharp$ , A, B, C, D, F $\natural$ , and A $\flat$ . It is described as irregular because it does not belong to any type of scale, but, as Burt pointed out in his book, is instead a combination of two pitch collections: a pentatonic scale on D and a major-minor chord on F.<sup>9</sup>

Burton acknowledged Event B's importance by saying that "the scale generates the work's melodic material,"<sup>10</sup> which means elements of this theme can be found in many other places, including both melodies and accompaniment chords. These elements

<sup>8</sup> Toru Takemitsu, *A String Around Autumn, November Steps, and Eclipse* for shakuhachi and biwa (Philips, 1991).

<sup>9</sup> Burt, 213-215.

<sup>10</sup> Takemitsu, *A String Around Autumn, November Steps, and Eclipse* for shakuhachi and biwa.

include the pentatonic and the major-minor chord, as well as the intervals that appear in the melody: the overlapping perfect fourths and minor sixths (A-F and C-A  $\flat$  found in the major-minor chord). Among those, the pentatonic collection is the most significant component since it begins Event B and the whole piece ends on a pentatonic chord. However, the piece is not only based on these elements. Other materials, such as Messiaen's modes of limited transposition or the octatonic collections, also take a significant role in the piece.<sup>11</sup>

Event B in its original form only appears three times in total. However, there are other melodies that look similar to Event B but have different degrees of alterations to the theme, such as the melody in Example 2.2.3, which uses an octatonic collection—OCT<sub>2,3</sub>. Despite the alteration of pitch collection, the melody can still be regarded as Event B because the melodic contour and the rhythmic profile remain the same. The passage begins with a longer note and accelerates by using smaller and smaller note values. (Example 2.2.3) The listeners are able to recognize the melody regardless of pitch content.

Example 2.2.3 Altered Event B in mm. 89-90




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<sup>11</sup> See chapter 3.



## 2.2.3 Event C

Example 2.2.4 Event C

Musical score for Example 2.2.4 Event C, measures 7-8. The score is in 4/4 time and features a piano (p) melody in the right hand and a piano-piano (pp) accompaniment in the left hand. The melody consists of a series of eighth notes, with a triplet of eighth notes in measure 7 and a triplet of eighth notes in measure 8. The accompaniment consists of a series of eighth notes, with a triplet of eighth notes in measure 7 and a triplet of eighth notes in measure 8. The key signature is one sharp (F#).

Event C is a short melody that first appears in measure 7. The pitches of the theme are all from the octatonic collection. Two consecutive sets of minor sixths are found at the end of the melodic line, which can be seen as related to the interval components of Event B (Example 2.2.4).

Example 2.2.5 Event B and Event C as a unit

1. mm. 4-7

Musical score for Example 2.2.5 Event B and Event C as a unit, measures 4-7. The score is in 4/4 time and features a piano (p) melody in the right hand and a piano-piano (pp) accompaniment in the left hand. The score includes tempo markings: "poco accel." leading to "Tempo I°" and "poco riten." leading to a double bar line. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The melody consists of a series of eighth notes, with a triplet of eighth notes in measure 4 and a triplet of eighth notes in measure 5. The accompaniment consists of a series of eighth notes, with a triplet of eighth notes in measure 4 and a triplet of eighth notes in measure 5. A blue arrow points from the label "Event B" to the melody in measure 4, and another blue arrow points from the label "Event C" to the melody in measure 5.

2. mm. 24-27

The musical score for measures 24-27 is shown. Measure 24 is marked 'Tempo' and 'poco' with a blue arrow pointing to 'Event B'. Measures 25-27 show dynamic markings (*p*, *mf*, *f*) and tempo changes (*poco*, 3 Tempo). Measure 27 is marked 'Event C' with a blue arrow. The score includes various musical notations like triplets, sixteenth notes, and glissandos.

The melodic contour of the theme is an example of Pattern A, the ‘zig-zag’ pattern. Event C always seems to be paired up with Event B, at least in the same section of music if not always back-to-back. If Event B is the initiator of a long passage, Event C can be regarded as the closer, as Event B is always placed in the beginning of a passage, and Event C is placed towards the end. Therefore, Event C is treated as a consequence of Event B. Example 2.2.5 shows a section where Event B and C are paired together as a unit.

## 2.2.4 Event D

Event D and Event C are similar in that they are both short and formed by the octatonic collection. Event D is always placed at the peak of a long phrase, thus indicating the climax of the phrase. Example 2.2.6a shows the first appearance of the event. The whole phrase starts in measure 17 and ends in measure 21. The phrase begins in a low register and gradually climbs up until it finally arrives at the first note of the event, a high C. The significance of the high C is enhanced by the rhythm and by

expression markings: the C is the longest note in the phrase, has a hairpin marking, and is the site of a dramatic shift in dynamics to piano. Event D appears three times in total in the piece, and the high notes in the later two appearances have the loudest dynamics of the phrase (Example 2.2.6b and 2.2.6c).

Example 2.2.6a Event D in m. 19

17  $\frac{5}{4}$  in Tempo *p cresc. molto* *poco accel.* *ff* *p* *a tempo* *3.5 (2+1.5)* *ten.* *a tempo*

20  $\frac{6.5 (4+2.5)}{4}$  *al niente* *mp* *poco sfz* *p* *poco mf* *mf*

Example 2.2.6b Event D in m. 59

57  $\frac{5}{4}$  *mf* *poco riten.* *f* *poco accel.* *allarg.* *cresc.*

59 *rall.* *ff* *f* *mf*

Example 2.2.6c Event D in m. 72

71  $\frac{5}{4}$  *p cresc.*

72 *ff* *f*

### 2.2.5 Event E

Event E has a significantly long melody and is always played by the oboe when presented by the orchestra. It has a unique sound compared to the other dominant melodies, such as the melodic lines in Event B, C, and D. First of all, the melody is assigned a new, slower tempo that belongs only to Event E. Takemitsu indicates the tempo change with “**Tempo II°** ♩ = ca. 32 [- 46].” The pitch collection also makes it stand out from the others because it uses Messiaen’s third mode of limited transposition and the acoustic scale.<sup>12</sup> The melodic contour is more lyrical and is not shaped by the ‘zig-zag’ pattern anymore. The design of the rhythms is also different: unlike the melodies mentioned previously, Event E does not begin with a long note and accelerate through rhythmic diminution. Rather, the length of each note is comparatively equal, even amid complicated syncopation and tied rhythms.

Example 2.2.7 Event E in mm. 41-42

The image displays a musical score for Event E, spanning measures 41 and 42. The score is written for a piano (p) and an oboe (ob). The tempo is marked "poco" and "Slightly Slower" with a tempo indication of "Tempo II° ♩ = ca. 32 [- 46]". The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The time signature is 3/4. The score includes various dynamic markings such as *pp*, *p*, *mf*, and *f*. The melody is characterized by a unique pitch collection and a more lyrical contour, featuring syncopation and tied rhythms. The notation includes triplets, sextuplets, and other complex rhythmic patterns. A blue box highlights a specific melodic phrase in measure 41, and another blue box highlights a phrase in measure 42. The score is marked with "poco" and "Slightly Slower" with a tempo indication of "Tempo II° ♩ = ca. 32 [- 46]".

<sup>12</sup> See chapter 3.

Example 2.2.7 shows the first appearance of Event E in measures 41 and 42, where the tempo marking, the melodic contour, and the rhythmic profile can be seen as very different from the melodies introduced before.

## 2.2.6 Event F

Event F is the last big event introduced in *A String Around Autumn*. The melody in this event is the melody that originates from Pattern B. Event F, shown in Example 2.2.8, starts with a pentatonic version of Pattern B and then extends itself with a scale-like passage.

Example 2.2.8 The first appearance of Event F in m. 60

Pattern B and extension

Example 2.2.9 shows that Event F consists of two different diatonic collections. As shown in the example, the first diatonic collection is the four-flat collection and the second one is the two-sharp collection. One thing to be noted is that the first chord accompanying the melody is a subset of the four-flat collection, a D-flat pentatonic chord. In the last appearance of the event in measures 136-137, a C pentatonic chord accompanies the melody and provides the harmony that ends the entire piece (see Example 2.2.10). Although the chord is only shown in the piano reduction in measure 137, in the score, this chord is sustained through from measure 136 until the end of the piece. Event F here is formed by the one-sharp diatonic collection.

Example 2.2.9 Event F's first appearance in mm. 60-61

4 ♭ Diatonic      2 # Diatonic

**J** Tempo II°

59 *ff* *f* *mf* *pp* [*cresc.*] *f* *mf*

60 *mf* *p* *ppp* *p*

61 *f*

D ♭ Pentatonic

Example 2.2.10 Event F in mm. 136-137

1 # Diatonic collection

**W** nearly Tempo II°

poco

135 *pp* *p* *mf* *p* *p* *mf* *p* *p* *mf* *p* *pp*

136 *f* *ff* *mf* *p* *pp*

137 *f* *ff* *mf* *p* *pp*

Final chord of the piece by C pentatonic collection

Event F always seems to be the event to end a section. The spiral form in Diagram 2.1 shows that Event F ends not only the entire piece but each previous section as well. The sections are indicated by the pause sign which can be found in the diagram. The use of pentatonic collection here is an evidence that the pitch collection plays a significant role in the piece, which also supports Burton's theory that Event B generates the melodic materials for the piece.


### 2.3 Formal Analysis

To me, Takemitsu's music creates images that depict nature. His work captures the passing of time and a person's relationship to his or her surroundings, combining musical elements into one to illustrate the wholeness of the universe. The patterns and the events mentioned in the analysis act as if they are objects from the natural environment, a philosophical metaphor he adopted from Japanese traditional gardens. Takemitsu gives life to these objects and has them interact with his listeners by turning them into musical events. The objects' locations and number of occurrences create a sense of motion, an interaction between the active listeners and the inactive objects. As noted by Burton, Takemitsu describes the whole of *A String Around Autumn* as "an imaginary landscape" in which "the solo viola plays the part of a human being observing nature in this autumn scene."<sup>13</sup> The spiral form in Diagram 2.1 visualizes this kind of aesthetic approach in the piece: the events and patterns are like the static elements in an imaginary landscape, such as trees, grass, or stones in a garden. The piece's events and patterns combine with the imaginary character to create meaning. While Takemitsu specifically designates the solo violist as the imaginary character, I view the listener, the composer, or humans in general

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<sup>13</sup> Takemitsu, *A String Around Autumn*, *November Steps*, and *Eclipse* for shakuhachi and biwa.

as equally valid possibilities for the character. The character walks through this setting, passing from object to object and taking each in. The character's pace is the pace of the music. The design of the spiral form not only presents the arrangement of the events and the patterns but further shows that Takemitsu finishes the piece by revisiting the passages heard previously in the music.<sup>14</sup> I designed the shape as a symbol of the imaginary landscape, which provides the platform for the elements and the imaginary character.

As one can see in Diagram 2.1, there are two big pauses inserted by Takemitsu that divide the piece into three large sections, each of which begins with an orchestral tutti passage and ends with Event F. Diagram 2.2a, 2.2b, and 2.2c represent the three different sections copied from the spiral form. The first section is from measure 1 to measure 61 (Diagram 2.2a), the second section is from measure 62 to measure 112 (Diagram 2.2b), and the last section is from measure 113 to the end (Diagram 2.2c). By looking at the measure numbers and the approximate playing time, one can tell that the first section is the longest with the following sections getting shorter and shorter. Although there are only 25 measures in the third section, the viola cadenza in measure 121 that I indicated with a fermata is a lengthy passage in itself. Takemitsu does not assign any time signatures for the expanded measure. He assists the passage with different tempo markings and either the break sign “” or rests to show the ending of each phrase.

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<sup>14</sup> The identical passages are shown with arrows in the diagram.



Diagram 2.2a The 1<sup>st</sup> section: mm. 1-61 (approx. 7 minutes)

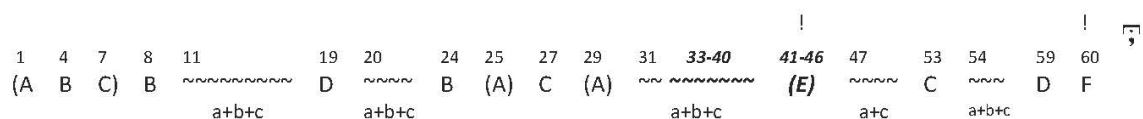


Diagram 2.2b The 2<sup>nd</sup> section: mm. 62-112 (approx. 6 minutes)

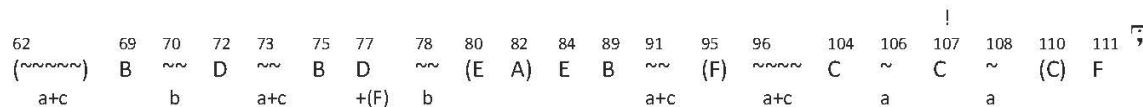
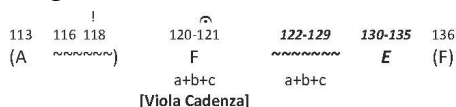


Diagram 2.2c The 3<sup>rd</sup> section: mm. 113-138 (approx. 5 minutes)



The first section introduces all of the events. The section spends two-thirds of the time establishing Events A, B, and C, especially the antecedent-consequent relationship between Event B and C. These two events are stated back-to-back in the orchestral introduction. Later on, in measures 24 to 27, even though the orchestra plays Event A between Events B and C, the connection between them is still there. Event E and Event F appear much later in the section as surprising new elements, creating a change in the atmosphere. Event E and the passage before it, both written in bold, are the passages that will come back intact in the third section.

The second section begins with an orchestral passage in which none of the major events appear. Instead, the passage is an expanded version of Pattern A, with the hexatonic collection occurring frequently in the melodies. All of the events can be found in this section, but they (mostly Events B and C) are presented with a great number of alterations. Even the Event E passage from measure 80 to 87 is interrupted by Event A. The second section is the only section that has major events happening at the same time, such as in measure 77. The harmony in this section also explores different possibilities. In

this piece, even though there are diatonic passages, the entire diatonic collection rarely appears. However, the passage in the orchestra in measures 107 and 108 uses all of the pitches from the six-flat collection, which can be recognized as an Aeolian scale (Example 2.3.1).

Example 2.3.1 The six-flat diatonic collection in mm. 107-108

In the last section that concludes the piece, Takemitsu returns to the passages from the beginning in order to create a sense of closure. The section begins with the same material as the very beginning of the piece, Event A, and the opening pitches are also the same. In the orchestral tutti passage, another special pitch collection can be found in the ascending figure in measure 118, which is the F-sharp minor melodic scale (Example 2.3.2). Following this, the viola cadenza consists of several short phrases that are shaped by all of the patterns that occur in the piece. The only prominent event appearing in the cadenza is Event F. Since Event F is the closing event for the previous sections, it is not surprising that this is the one event Takemitsu chooses to include. After the cadenza, Takemitsu repeats the passages in the first section from measure 33 to 46. The only difference is Event E in the third section is not only played by the orchestra but also by

the solo viola. In my interpretation, this is a symbol showing that the solo violist represents the imaginary character revisiting the object discovered earlier in the piece. The whole piece ends with the last appearance of Event F played by the orchestra while the solo viola decorates the phrase with an ascending motion shaped by Patterns A and B.

Takemitsu's compositional style is very expressive. He puts in a lot of thought into the design of the form so that a traditional Japanese garden-inspired philosophical aesthetic comes across. And the formal design is of course not the only element that contributes to its expressiveness. The piece's luxurious sound, which is created in part by the pitch collections, is also an important component. I will therefore spend the next chapter discussing the pitch collections used in this piece.

## Chapter 3: Pitch Collections in *A String Around Autumn*

### 3.1 Olivier Messiaen and George Russell

Throughout his career, Takemitsu was fond of music by French composers such as Debussy, Franck, Fauré, and Messiaen. Among these composers, Messiaen's modalism had the most significant influence on Takemitsu's compositions in terms of the use of pitch collections. As a young composer, Takemitsu encountered Messiaen's work on several occasions: he was introduced to Messiaen's piano music (such as *Preludes for piano*, 1929) through the Japanese composer Yoshi Ichianagi in the early 1950s,<sup>1</sup> and in 1953 he received Messiaen's treatise *Technique de mon langage musical* (Paris, 1944) as a gift from another composer, Kishio Hirao.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Takemitsu founded "Jikken-Kobo" (Experimental Studio) with his artist friends in 1951, which was dedicated to introducing new compositions to Japanese audiences. Performing Messiaen's work was one of the group's focuses.<sup>3</sup>

In Takemitsu's early compositions (from the late 1940s and early 50s), he was already incorporating Messiaen's modes of limited transposition, especially the first mode (the whole tone scale), the second mode (the octatonic scale), and the third mode.<sup>4</sup> Burt points out that "Takemitsu frequently uses the octatonic mode exclusively for extended passages, and it is this feature that is probably the most responsible for the 'Messiaenic' flavor exuded by so much of his music."<sup>5</sup> As an example, Burt discusses

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<sup>1</sup> Ohtake, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Siddons, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ohtake, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Messiaen's modes of limited transposition used in *A String Around Autumn* will be introduced individually later in this chapter.

<sup>5</sup> Burt, 32.

Takemitsu's piano work *Lento in Due Movimenti* (1950), in which the mode permeates entire sections of the second movement.<sup>6</sup>

In Takemitsu's childhood with his parents living in Dalian, China, he encountered jazz music through American movies<sup>7</sup> and through the influence of his father, who was very passionate about jazz.<sup>8</sup> Because of these childhood experiences, elements from jazz music remained important in his compositions throughout his life. In his film music, direct quotations of jazz tunes can be found, for example, in the scores for *Karami-ai* (*The Inheritance*, 1962), *Tōkyō Sensō Sengo Hiwa* (*The Man Who Put His Will on Film*, 1970), and *Natsu no Imoto* (*Dear Summer Sister*, 1972).<sup>9</sup> In the context of his concert works, jazz elements are particularly important in his compositional treatment of modal materials. Takemitsu came across *The Lydian Chromatic Concept in Tonal Organization for Improvisation* (1959), a jazz music theory book by the American jazz pianist, composer, and theorist George Russell. Takemitsu was particularly influenced by its “Lydian Chromatic” concept. Burt claims that

just as the jazz improviser may choose to combine the scales of Russell's system freely, thereby using all twelve pitch-classes—the ‘Lydian Chromatic Scale’—so too Takemitsu combines the pitches of his own modes to generate the total-chromatic, producing a ‘pantonal’ music.<sup>10</sup>

Takemitsu emphasized the concept of the pantonal music in his own article “Dream and Number,” in which he described mode as “a horizontal series of sounds, an organic series that interests me because it does not reject sounds from outside the scale.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Burt, 32.

<sup>7</sup> Siddons, 2.

<sup>8</sup> Burt, 21.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>11</sup> Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 119.

In Takemitsu's view, even though the modes divide the pitches into different categories, they do not prevent the categories from interacting with each other.

As I will show through detailed analyses in the following section, Messiaen's modes of limited transposition and George Russell's idea of combining scales provide the resources and techniques for pitch organization in *A String Around Autumn*. Subsets of Messiaen's Mode II and Mode III can be found throughout the melodies, sometimes combined with each other or with pitches from outside the collections. Other prominent pitch collections in the piece include diatonic and acoustic collections, which will be introduced later in the chapter.

### **3.2 The second mode of limited transposition—octatonic collection**

Mode II, the octatonic scale, [0134679A],<sup>12</sup> is composed of segments, each comprising the intervals of a semitone and a tone (or the reverse).<sup>13,14</sup> Only three specific versions of the Mode II scale are available, each with a distinct set of pitches. The first version starts from pitch class '0,' the second one from pitch class '1,' and the third from pitch class '2.' In the analysis, each kind is indicated as OCT<sub>0,1</sub>, OCT<sub>1,2</sub>, and OCT<sub>2,3</sub>. Octatonic scales and their subsets in *A String Around Autumn* serve as one of the main referential pitch collections. They are nearly always present, though they only occasionally become the exclusive focus. Most of the time they appear as a part of the

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<sup>12</sup> Arabic numerals represent the 12 semitones in an octave. In this system of labeling, "A" stands for 10 and "B" stands for 11, to avoid ambiguity.

<sup>13</sup> Donald Street, *The Modes of Limited Transposition*, *The Musical Times*, Vol. 117 No. 1604 (Oct., 1976): 819.

<sup>14</sup> For instance, the octatonic scale can be arranged into the segments of [013, 346, 679, and 9A0]. Or, perhaps, overlapping [013, 134, 346, 467, 679, 79A, 9A0]—all of which have the same interval structure (013), which means they are comprised of the intervals mentioned here.

melody or a segment of the accompanying material. They often combine with other pitch collections or with each other.

In Example 3.2.1 and 3.2.2, the circled segments show how the subsets of octatonic collections appear as part of the passages. They are combined with other materials from different pitch collections. This type of handling of pitch collections is very common in *A String Around Autumn*.

Example 3.2.1 OCT<sub>2,3</sub> in m. 6

Example 3.2.2 OCT<sub>0,1</sub> in m. 19 and m. 21

Although traces of octatonic collections can be found in many places in the piece, Example 3.2.3 shows a particularly extensive use of the octatonic collection. The collection forms the majority of the melody in this section, and this is the first time all eight pitches from the collection are used. The passage includes Event C in measure 53. Whenever this event appears, it is consistently constructed using subsets of octatonic

collections. Additionally, the same octatonic collection is also visible in the passage's accompaniment (Example 3.2.4).

Example 3.2.3 OCT<sub>0,1</sub> in mm. 52–54: melody

Example 3.2.3 shows a musical score for the melody in measures 52–54. The score is in 3/4 time, with a key signature of one flat. It includes dynamic markings like *p*, *f*, *mf*, and *p*, and tempo markings like *rall.*, *Tempo I°*, and *poco riten.* A blue oval highlights a specific melodic phrase in measure 53, with an arrow pointing to it labeled "Event C".

Example 3.2.4 OCT<sub>0,1</sub> in m. 54: accompaniment

Example 3.2.4 shows a musical score for the accompaniment in measure 54. The score is in 3/4 time, with a key signature of one flat. It includes dynamic markings like *p*, *mf*, and *p*. A blue oval highlights a specific accompaniment phrase in measure 54.

Example 3.2.5 is another example of an octatonic collection being used exclusively for most of a section. The entire collection is presented in the passage, and the subset of the collection is found in the accompaniment. Compared to Example 3.2.3, this section shows a stronger octatonic character, since the section is immediately and exclusively in that mode.



Example 3.2.5 OCT<sub>2,3</sub> in mm. 89–94

### 3.3 The third mode of limited transposition

The third mode of limited transposition, which is indicated as Mode III here [01245689A], consists of three segments, each comprised of a tone followed by two semitones (or alternatively two semitones and a tone, or a semitone, a tone and a semitone).<sup>15</sup> It generates four specific scales based on four different starting pitches: Mode III<sub>11,1</sub>, Mode III<sub>0,2</sub>, Mode III<sub>1,3</sub>, and Mode III<sub>2,4</sub>. The numbers show the first two pitch classes of the scale. *A String Around Autumn* uses a great deal of Mode III as well as its subsets, such as hexachordal collections or augmented triads. The importance of Mode III is presented right away at the beginning of the piece: Event A in the orchestral introduction in measures 1 and 2 consists solely of Mode III (Example 3.3.1).

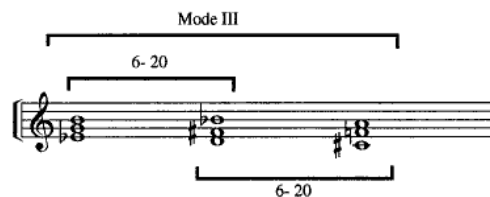
<sup>15</sup> Street, 819.

### Example 3.3.1 Mode III for Event A in mm. 1–2

$\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 46 [-52]$

This Event A in Example 3.3.1 belongs to Mode III<sub>11,1</sub>. Mode III allows the passage to incorporate a lot of major thirds in both the melody and the chords. As a result, the passage has an open sonority, which is emphasized by the augmented triad (B $\flat$ , D, F $\sharp$ ) hidden in the tertian harmonies of the second measure. Event A comes back five more times later in the piece (although at different transpositions) and each time the pitch collections are from Mode III.

Diagram 3.3.1 Burt’s example of the relationship of Mode III to hexatonic collection



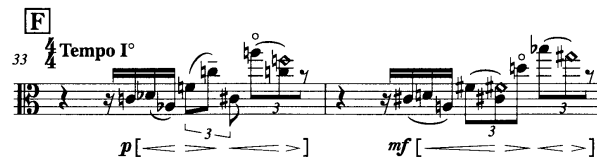
One more thing to be noted from Event A is the arpeggiated passage in measure 2, which is formed by the hexatonic collection [014589]. This passage showcases the relationship between Mode III and the hexatonic collection, the latter being a subset of the former. Burt discusses this subset-superset relationship between the two pitch collections with Diagram 3.3.1.<sup>16</sup> Burt explains that “the hexatonic collection may be

<sup>16</sup> The “6-20” in the diagram indicates the hexatonic collection, which is from the pitch collection naming system by Allen Forte.

segmented into two augmented triads a semitone apart, making it a subset of Messiaen's third 'Mode of Limited Transposition,' which may indeed be formed from three such semitonally adjacent augmented chords," as shown in Diagram 3.3.1.<sup>17</sup>

Another example from *A String Around Autumn* that shows Takemitsu's awareness of the subset-superset relationship is in the passage from measure 33 to measure 34. In this case, the hexatonic collections in measure 33 (HEX<sub>0,1</sub>) and measure 34 (HEX<sub>1,2</sub>) are both subsets of Mode III<sub>2,4</sub>. These two measures form a sequential passage, where the second measure is transposed up a minor second (Example 3.3.2).

Example 3.3.2 Mode III<sub>2,4</sub> in mm. 33–34



Besides appearing in Event A and in the passage shown in Example 3.3.2, two different collections of Mode III can also be found in Event E (Example 3.3.3). Event E appears three times in total, with the second appearance being interrupted by an Event A. All appearances of Event E use the same Mode III collection without any kinds of transposition. Example 3.3.3 shows that the first part of the event is formed by Mode III<sub>1,3</sub>, and Mode III<sub>2,4</sub> is found at the end of the event.

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<sup>17</sup> Burt, 78.

Example 3.3.3 Mode III in Event E, mm. 83–87

The previous examples of Mode II (octatonic) and Mode III not only show the appearances and the handling of the pitch collections but also demonstrate how the collection seldom takes over an entire passage. These passages very often incorporate pitches that are not from the same pitch collections, thus demonstrating how George Russell’s Lydian Chromatic concept influenced Takemitsu’s approach to using pitch collections. The combination of these two approaches ultimately led to Takemitsu’s own concept of “pantonal” music. Even though the pitch collections divide the pitches up into different categories, Takemitsu is able to combine categories flexibly, utilizing the individual characters of each kind without being unduly limited by them. Example 3.3.4 demonstrates how Takemitsu forms a passage with different pitch collections.

Here, Mode III is combined with the five-sharp diatonic collection and the two-sharp diatonic collection. In measure 30 to 31, two external notes—D $\sharp$  and B—are added to the Mode III passage that are members of the five-sharp diatonic collection in the next measure. This shows that Takemitsu allows the pitch collections to overlap with one another, weakening the boundaries between collections. This particular example is

also relevant for the next category of pitch collections to be discussed—the diatonic collection.

Example 3.3.4 the combination of different pitch collections in mm. 29-33

Mode III<sub>2,4</sub>

External note: D #

Tempo

mf

pp

mf

f

5 # collection

2 # collection

Allarg.

External note: B

### 3.4 Diatonic collection

*A String Around Autumn* extensively uses diatonic collections and their subsets, of which the pentatonic collection is the most prominent. Its significance can be first seen in Event B, where a pentatonic collection forms the majority of the melody and also the accompanying chord (Example 3.4.1a).

Example 3.4.1a C pentatonic collection in m. 4

Example 3.4.1b B-flat pentatonic theme in m. 20

Later on, pentatonic collections also appear in other places, such as the passage in Example 3.4.1b, where a pentatonic melody (Motive B) is accompanied by a pentatonic chord. It is especially significant that the piece ends with a C pentatonic sonority (Example 3.4.1c). This sonority is prepared in the final appearance of Event A at the beginning of the last big section of the piece (Example 3.4.1d). This Event A is formed by Mode III<sub>1,3</sub> and the extra C and E are added to the passage, in my opinion, to hint at the arrival of the C pentatonic collection at the end. These examples thus suggest the importance of the pentatonic collection to the piece as a whole.

Example 3.4.1c C pentatonic collection at the end of the piece, mm. 137-138

Example 3.4.1d The introductory passage to the last section of the piece, mm. 113–115  
Additional C and E

In this piece, one way Takemitsu manipulates the diatonic-pentatonic pair is to focus on the pentatonic collection and expand or embellish it with “extra” pitches coming from its diatonic superset. By doing this, the sound of the pentatonic collection is

Example 3.4.2 mm. 12–16

15

*f* *poco* *mf* *p*

*mp* *pp*

Mode III<sub>1,1</sub>

*poco ri*

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*

D  $\flat$  pentatonic C  $\flat$  pentatonic (!)

50



the piano reduction, has a  $C^{\flat}$ , which is a pitch borrowed from the D-flat pentatonic collection's five-flat diatonic superset. In the second half of measure 13, a C-flat pentatonic chord can be found in the harmony, with an  $F^{\flat}$  from the six-flat diatonic collection added to the passage. The next pair in the example is made up of an A pentatonic chord and its superset, a four-sharp collection, and the external pitches are the  $D^{\sharp}$  and  $G^{\sharp}$  in the melody.

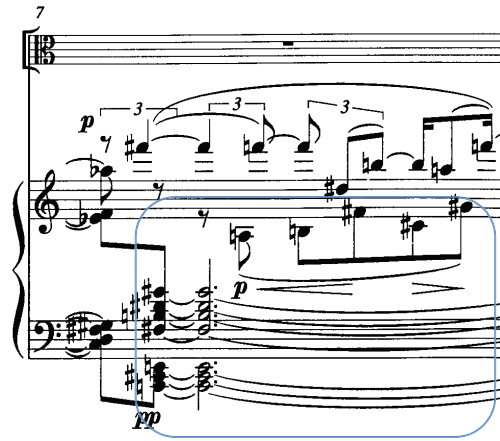
The second short passage in measures 15 and 16 features a similar combination of pitch collections, although the last chord is a Mode III chord and a Mode III passage is found in measure 16. In this entire excerpt (measures 12–16), if taking the three pentatonic chords as a group, they create a series that descends by a whole step: D-flat pentatonic, C-flat pentatonic, and A pentatonic. However, the progression is not supported in the bass line, because the bass note of the second chord is a  $D^{\flat}$  instead of a  $C^{\flat}$ . Significantly, the bass line in the next two measures (measures 15 and 16) does use the first pitch of each collection ( $D^{\flat}$ ,  $C^{\flat}$ , and A), thus confirming the chord progression in the previous passage and “supporting” it in retrospect. However, another twist to the design of the entire passage is the use of Mode III for the last chord instead of a diatonic collection. This suggests that when Takemitsu repeats material or a passage, he does not quote the exact statement but uses some degree of alteration. Burt, too, discusses this:

Takemitsu favors not so much a literal remembrance of things past, but a sort of ‘paramnesic’ recollection of earlier material, in which various features are subjected to minute, apparently arbitrary, alteration in one

way or other, and this was to become a distinctive feature of the composer's style.<sup>18</sup>

Diatonic collections are important not only because of their pentatonic subsets, but because they sometimes provide harmonies for passages. For example, in measure 7, the polychord in the harmony is built by an A major triad and a G-sharp seventh chord. These pitches are from the four-sharp diatonic collection. The same collection also provides the pitches for the melody in the middle voice of the piano reduction (see Example 3.4.3).

Example 3.4.3 A diatonic chord in the harmony in m. 7



Diatonic chords in *A String Around Autumn* also sometimes have interesting interactions with an octatonic collection. Since an octatonic collection can also generate a diatonic tertian chord, Takemitsu simultaneously applied both a diatonic collection and an octatonic collection to elaborate the sonority. Example 3.4.4 is the Event E in letter G, where a D major seventh chord acts as a pivot between the two-sharp collection and the OCT<sub>2,3</sub> collection. The first chord of the passage is a D major seventh chord, which can come from either a two-sharp diatonic collection or an octatonic collection, OCT<sub>2,3</sub>. The

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<sup>18</sup> Burt, 35.

chord in measure 42 is a D major ninth chord with an extra E added to the chord, and this makes the chord belong to the diatonic collection. The bottom part in measures 43 and 44 consists of pitches from OCT<sub>2,3</sub>. In measures 45 and 46, except for the last C pentatonic chord, the rest of the measure is built from the two-sharp collection. Takemitsu's combinations of pitch collections enables the passage to have both the color of a diatonic tertian chord and the chromaticism of an octatonic collection.

Example 3.4.4 The diatonic and octatonic chords in mm. 42–46

poco G **Slightly Slower**  
 very short Tempo II° ♩ = ca. 32 [- 46]

40  $DM^7-2^\sharp / OCT_{2,3}$

42  $DM^9-2^\sharp$   $OCT_{2,3}$

44  $DM^7-2^\sharp / OCT_{2,3}$   $2^\sharp$   $2^\sharp$

45  $2^\sharp$

46  $2^\sharp$

Another significant and special moment involving diatonic collections takes place in letter R. In this passage, a six-flat diatonic collection appears with all seven notes in an ascending order, which makes an E-flat Aeolian scale (see Example 3.4.5).

Example 3.4.5

The musical score for Example 3.4.5 consists of three systems, each with a piano (p) and violin (v) staff. The score includes various annotations and diatonic collections.

**System 1 (Measures 106-111):**

- Measure 106: *poco riten.*, *f*, *Tempo II°*. A blue box highlights a diatonic collection labeled "B pentatonic (6 #)".
- Measure 107: *f*, *mf*, *p*. A blue box highlights a diatonic collection labeled "B-pent. (6 #)".
- Measure 108: *mf*. A blue box highlights a diatonic collection labeled "6 b (E b Aeolian scale)".
- Measure 109: *p*, *mf*. A blue box highlights a diatonic collection labeled "B-pent. (6 #)".
- Measure 110: *f*. A blue box highlights a diatonic collection labeled "B-pent. (6 #)".
- Measure 111: *p*. A blue box highlights a diatonic collection labeled "B-pent. (6 #)".

**System 2 (Measures 109-114):**

- Measure 109: *p*, *mf*. A blue box highlights a diatonic collection labeled "0 # / b".
- Measure 110: *p*, *mf*. A blue box highlights a diatonic collection labeled "B-pent. (6 #)".
- Measure 111: *f*. A blue box highlights a diatonic collection labeled "6 #".
- Measure 112: *p*, *cresc.*. A blue box highlights a diatonic collection labeled "0 # / b".
- Measure 113: *f*. A blue box highlights a diatonic collection labeled "0 # / b".
- Measure 114: *p*. A blue box highlights a diatonic collection labeled "0 # / b".

**System 3 (Measures 112-113):**

- Measure 112: *p*. A blue box highlights a diatonic collection labeled "6 #".
- Measure 113: *mf*. A blue box highlights a diatonic collection labeled "0 # / b".

In the supporting harmony, the same diatonic collection appears as a B pentatonic chord; thus, pitches in the chord are spelled enharmonically. The B pentatonic collection is featured not only in the harmony but also in the solo viola part in measure 108. In this passage, Takemitsu incorporates the diatonic collection with both enharmonic spellings. The ascending scale in measures 106 and 107 appears to be the six-flat collection. For the B pentatonic chord and the viola melody in measures 111 and 112, the collection turns into the six-sharp collection. Other than the six-flat/sharp collection, the zero-sharp/flat collection can be found oscillating with the six-flat/sharp collection.

### **3.5 Acoustic collection**

Burt notes that the “acoustic scale”—a major scale with sharpened fourth and flattened seventh ([0,1,3,4,6,8,10])—is one of Takemitsu’s favorite heptatonic collections. According to Burt, Takemitsu most likely came across this scale either in the work of Debussy or in Russell’s “Lydian Chromatic Concept,” where a version of this scale is dubbed the “Lydian Augmented Scale.”<sup>19</sup> Since Takemitsu’s compositional language was influenced by elements from jazz music, there is a third way he might have encountered the acoustic collection: as the fourth mode of the melodic minor ascending scale in jazz theory. It is not clear which one of these sources introduced him to this kind of collection, but it is clear that the scale figures prominently in his compositions. Several examples from *A String Around Autumn* will show the significance of the acoustic collection in the piece’s harmonic materials. In the following analysis, each acoustic

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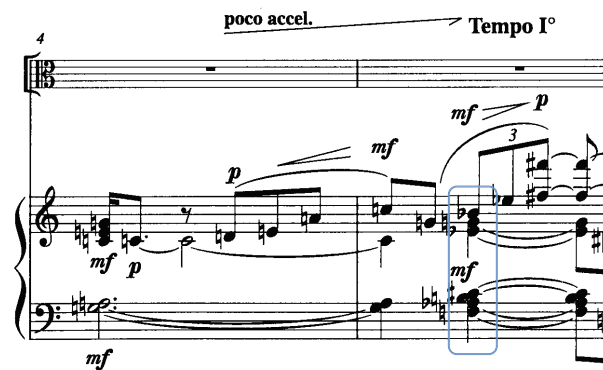
<sup>19</sup> Burt, 81.

collection will be named by the first pitch of the collection, but the initial pitch does not necessarily suggest the tonal center of the passage.

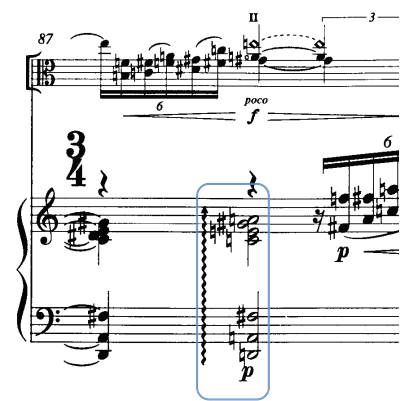
As with other pitch collections described above, Takemitsu uses the acoustic collection in the form of either a chord or a melodic figure. For example, in measure 5 and measure 87 of Example 3.5.1, acoustic collections can be seen in the vertical chords. The chord in measure 5 consists of all seven notes from the A-flat acoustic collection, although the spelling of the notes is sometimes enharmonic. Also, the chord in measure 87 is made up of notes from an A acoustic collection.

#### Example 3.5.1

m. 5



m. 87



In Example 3.5.2a and Example 3.5.2b, acoustic collections can be found in the melodies. The circled passage in Example 3.5.2a uses notes from the F acoustic collection. Example 3.5.2b shows the first appearance of Event E, and the A acoustic collection proves its importance by appearing in the second phrase of the event.

Example 3.5.2a Acoustic collection m. 19

18

3.5 (2+1.5)

4

4

*f* *mp*

3 3

Example 3.5.2b Acoustic collection in m.42 in Event E (mm.41–43)

40

poco

G

very short

Slightly Slower

Tempo II° = ca. 32 [-46]

3

4

*p* *mf* *mf* *mf* *p*

3 6 3 3 2

42

*mf* *p* *f* *mf* *p*

3 6 3 6 3

A acoustic collection

*Conclusion*

As this chapter has shown, harmonies and melodies in *A String Around Autumn* are based to a high degree on modal language. However, modalism is not a limiting factor for Takemitsu's creativity. In this composition, he synthesizes what he learned from other composers, such as Messiaen, Debussy, and jazz musician George Russell, while adding little twists of his own. He saw the potential of each collection and found

ways to combine them. In part because of the way Takemitsu incorporates modalism, *A String Around Autumn* does not come across as a highly chromatic, “atonal” piece but rather one in which the audience can hear multiple tonalities happen simultaneously, a “sea of tonality.”



## Chapter 4: Other Aspects of *A String Around Autumn*

### 4.1 The establishment of centricity

*A String Around Autumn* is a post-tonal composition, which means it does not use functional harmony to establish any tonal centricity. Straus notes in *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory* that “post-tonal music has various ways of creating a sense of focus on a particular note or harmony, or creating a sense of large-scale harmonic motion.” He further explains that “all tonal music is centric, but not all centric music is tonal. Even without the resources of tonality, music can be organized around referential centers.”<sup>1</sup> The referential centers mentioned here could be pitch collections, such as diatonic, octatonic, or hexatonic collections. For Takemitsu’s compositions composed after 1980, Burt points out that Takemitsu uses tonal resolutions centered on a particular pitch or key, and the “tonality” thus might be from modally-based harmonies.<sup>2</sup> *A String Around Autumn* uses a number of pitch collections to create the piece’s tonal design, including Messiaen’s third mode of limited transposition and diatonic and octatonic collections. However, after my chapter 3 discussion of the pentatonic collection’s importance,<sup>3</sup> I believe that particular collection helps establish both harmonic and melodic centricity. The harmonic factor determines the C pentatonic collection or its zero sharp/flat diatonic superset as the referential center, and the melodic factor emphasizes the significance of the pitch “C.”

The pentatonic/diatonic collection coincides with the important formal landmarks and special moments of the piece. These formal landmarks are Event B and Event F,

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<sup>1</sup> Straus, 130-131.

<sup>2</sup> Burt, 177-179.

<sup>3</sup> See the diatonic collection section in chapter 3, 45-46.

events that begin with pentatonic collections in both the melody and harmony. These two events are important because they represent the beginning and the end of the section. The whole piece starts with Event A, but it is Event B that presents the first important melody, with Event A serving merely as an introduction. Moreover, Event B marks the solo viola's initial entrance, thus making Event B the first formal landmark of piece. As discussed in chapter 2, Event F indicates the end of each big section and eventually the whole piece. The combination of these events and collections therefore emphasizes the importance of the diatonic/pentatonic collection in either establishing the “tonality” or creating a sense of arrival.

Aside from the pentatonic moments created by the appearances of Event B and Event F, there is another crucial diatonic/pentatonic moment in the piece in the passage at letter R. As mentioned in chapter 3, this passage uses all of the pitches from the six-flat diatonic collection to form an E-flat Aeolian scale, and the passage is supported by a B pentatonic chord in the accompaniment. This is the one and the only time that an entire collection appears in the form of a clear ascending scale, resulting in a particularly distinctive-sounding passage.

Diagram 4.1

Measure no.	4	8	60	107	111	136
Events	(B)	B	F	[R]	F	F
Pentatonic collection	C	C	D $\flat$	B	B	C

Diagram 4.1 lists all of the important pentatonic moments that happen in the piece. The Event B in measure 4 is in the orchestral passage indicated by the parentheses, and the “[R]” in measure 107 represents the six-flat diatonic passage at letter R. The diagram indicates the collection for the passage as B pentatonic, since the passage is

accompanied by a B pentatonic chord. As shown in the diagram, the C pentatonic collection begins and ends the piece. The other two collections in between are D  $\flat$  pentatonic and B pentatonic, which are the upper and lower neighbors of the C collection. The arrangement of pentatonic collections circles around the C pentatonic collection: the C pentatonic collection's importance is emphasized by the appearances of its neighboring collections. Therefore, C pentatonic can be seen as the referential center of the piece, and its appearances provide a strong sense of arrival at the end of the piece.

#### Example 4.1.1 External pitches in Event A's last appearance

External pitches: C and E

The musical score for Example 4.1.1 shows a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts at measure 112 with a 'poco riten.' marking and a 'Tempo I°' marking. The piano accompaniment is in 4/4 time. A blue box highlights a section of the piano accompaniment labeled 'Mode III<sub>11,1</sub>'. An arrow points from the text 'External pitches: C and E' to a specific chord in this section. The score also includes markings for 'p', 'mp', 'mf', 'f', and 'ff'.

Another indication of the C pentatonic collection's importance can be found in the last appearance of Event A, which is the passage that begins the last section of the piece. As discussed in chapter 3, external pitches C and E are found outside of the passage's

main pitch collection, which is Mode III<sub>11,1</sub>. These two pitches can be interpreted as hinting at the arrival of the C pentatonic collection at the end of the piece (Example 4.1.1).

Not only is the C pentatonic collection important, but the pitch C itself has a prominent role in the piece as well. The pitch is emphasized by its placement in crucial moments in the melodies of the Events. Not only is C the very last note of the piece, it also begins both melodic phrases in Event E (Example 4.1.2a). Moreover, in the orchestral passage shortly after Event E's first appearance, the pitch C is repeated several times in measures 48 and 49 by different instruments such as lower strings, woodwinds, harp, and percussion (Example 4.1.2b).

Example 4.1.2a Pitch "C" begins Event E

(solo viola)

Example 4.1.2b Repeated pitch C in mm. 48-49

The centricity of *A String Around Autumn* shows that Takemitsu uses a more conventional approach towards the piece's tonal design by basing it primarily on modal language. The way he incorporates the upper and lower collections to emphasize the central collection can be found in Western common-practice composition techniques. However, he also applies the pantonal concept from George Russell's theory to prepare for the arrival of the final C pentatonic collection. Takemitsu thus combines all of these influences to create his own musical signature.

#### **4.2 The “*pan-focal*” orchestration and the extended instrumental techniques**

Takemitsu once expressed in an interview that he was attracted to and very much influenced by Debussy's music, especially his orchestral music and techniques of orchestration. He praised the distinctiveness of Debussy's orchestration, especially in contrast to the orchestration of most German music. Takemitsu held that the emphasis in German music is on sonic uniformity, where the whole orchestra is typically used to create a single voice or one color. Debussy, on the other hand, was able to “seek many points of focus and many gradations of color,” and he was adept at combining several things at the same time to create different layers.<sup>4</sup> In his own essay “Dream and Number,” Takemitsu expresses his view that Debussy's orchestration is his greatest contribution to Western contemporary music in the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> Takemitsu then creates his own term, pan-focus, to describe Debussy's orchestration style.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Takemitsu, *Afterword*, 207-208.

<sup>5</sup> Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 110.

<sup>6</sup> Ohtake, 7.

Debussy's orchestration style is famous for his ability to create a shimmering color and subtle changes in tone quality. Takemitsu applies Debussy's style, specifically the pan-focal style, to *A String Around Autumn* in order to accentuate the expressive qualities in his own music. The pan-focal writing is achieved through different organizations of instruments and applying extended instrumental techniques to the passages. The most common instrumental organizations found in *A String Around Autumn* are the heterophonic and canonic designs. In this piece, a single phrase is rarely dominated by one instrument, but more often performed simultaneously by different instruments. This way, almost every note each phrase can be presented with a different kind of sound. This type of textural arrangement is identified as heterophony, the simultaneous variation of a single melody.<sup>7</sup> The first example of this can be found at the beginning of the piece. After the first note is played by the flutes in Event B, the melody is doubled by the oboes, harp, and celesta. When doubling the melody, the instruments are not simply playing the same notes but are asked to play the notes with different effects. For instance, in the first flute, each note of the first phrase is played with octave oscillations, and the second phrase with flutter-tonguing technique. The melody from the theme only lasts for three measures, but each time when a different instrument is added to the passage, a different color is created (Example 4.2.1).

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<sup>7</sup> Arnold Whittall, "heterophony." *The Oxford Companion to Music*. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e3240>.

[illegible]

The passage in Example 4.2.2 demonstrates the other frequently used instrumental organization: canonic design. In *A String Around Autumn*, Takemitsu tends to divide a phrase into small segments and pass these segments between instruments in a canonic style. Each instrument is in charge of a small segment of the melody, continuing the line by passing the part from one to another.

Example 4.2.3 Viola cadenza at letter T

The musical score for the Viola cadenza at letter T consists of four staves. The first staff begins with a box labeled 'T' and the tempo marking 'Tempo I°'. It includes the instruction '< senza sord. > freely' and features a sequence of notes with dynamic markings *p*, *mf*, *p*, *f*, and *mf*. The second staff continues the melody with dynamics *f*, *p*, *mf*, *ff*, *f*, and *mf*. The third staff is marked '(nearly Tempo II°)' and includes 'Tempo I° trem.' and '(s.p.)'. Dynamics here are *p*, *fp*, *pp*, *mf*, and *p*. The fourth staff is marked 'Tempo II°' and includes 'arco ord.' and '(+ pizz.)'. Dynamics are *f*, *p*, *p*, and *mf*. The score is written in 3/8 time and includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and articulation marks.

The pan-focal writing is also applied to the solo viola's melodies. In order to add different colors to the viola sound, sometimes the melodies have a few notes doubled by the orchestra in the heterophonic style mentioned before. Most of the time, however, the viola creates different colors by using a variety of extended instrumental techniques. The extended techniques and the large intervallic leaps in the melodic lines, especially when played by a string instrument, create an expressive quality in Takemitsu's music. All of



the extended techniques used throughout the piece are found compiled in the viola cadenza.

The example shows Takemitsu's extensive markings in the score, which allow him to assign a specific color to each note through different techniques. These techniques include using natural and false harmonics, playing with a mute, different bow placements, tremolo, and pizzicato. In passages other than the cadenza, one can find techniques such as glissandos and playing without vibrato. Each technique delivers its own special effect. For instance, the harmonics can immediately change the timbre and create a sudden shift in register, and different placements of the bow, with the markings of “(s.p.)” (sul ponticello—on the bridge) or “(p.o.)” (position ordinary) also provide a wide spectrum of tone qualities. The sheer quantity of dynamic instructions also allows Takemitsu to make subtle adjustments. Interestingly, he controls very carefully the tone quality, the dynamic, and the tempo/pacing (to be discussed later in the chapter), yet puts “freely” at the beginning of the cadenza, suggesting that elements beyond these indications are up for interpretation. Even with all of the instructions, he challenges the performer to interpret the music on a deeper level. Playing the cadenza freely is actually the most difficult task for the performer to accomplish.

Most of the devices for solo viola also apply to the string instruments of the orchestra, with the addition of frequent trills when accompanying other instruments. Other instruments also frequently use extended techniques throughout the piece. For example, the flutes and brass instruments use flutter-tonguing, and the flutes and oboes play harmonics. The horns use stopped technique,<sup>8</sup> *cuivré*,<sup>9</sup> and bells up, while the

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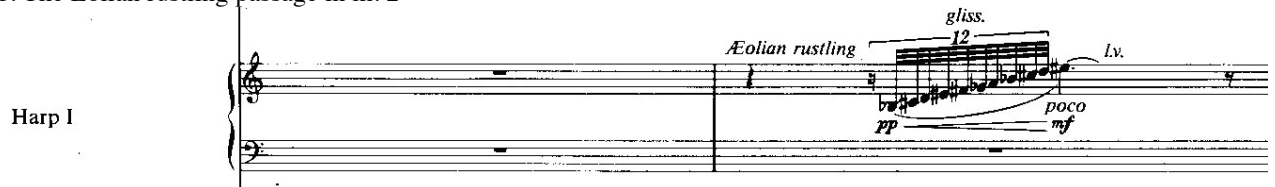
<sup>8</sup> This kind of technique is indicated as *bouché* in the piece.

trumpets and trombones use different kinds of mutes (ex: straight mute, cup mute, or the Harmon).

There are extended techniques for the harp as well, such as playing the passage with harmonics or closer to the soundboard (*à la table*) to create a nasal and metallic sound, or playing with different kinds of glissando techniques such as Eolian rustling<sup>10</sup> or bisbigliando<sup>11</sup> (Example 4.2.4).

#### Example 4.2.4 Extended harp techniques

##### 1. The Eolian rustling passage in m. 2



##### 2. The bisbigliando passage in m. 73



One interesting way that Takemitsu uses the percussion instruments is to rest the small or medium cymbals upside down on the skin of the timpani and have the percussionist play a tremolo on the cymbal (Example 4.2.5).

<sup>9</sup> Samuel Adler, *The Study of Orchestration* (New York: W.W. Norton, c1989), 292: *cuivré*: means “brassy.” It is obtained by greater-than-normal lip tension and harder blowing, causing the metal to vibrate.

<sup>10</sup> Carlos Salzedo, *Modern Study of the Harp*, (New York: Schirmer, 1921), 11: “Eolian rustling.” The hands, pressing the strings, are drawn slowly across them, fingers close together in the horizontal position. The notes indicate the (approximate) point of departure of each movement.

<sup>11</sup> Elaine Gould, *Behind Bars: The Definitive Guide to Music Notation* (London: Faber Music, 2011), 360. The term bisbigliando (Italian, ‘whispering’; abbrev. Bisbigl. or bisb.) indicates an unmeasured rapid tremolo between two or more strings played quietly in the middle and upper registers of the harp.

#### Example 4.2.5

Perc.

1° Cymb. (M) on Timp.  
\* with medium soft mallets

3°

gliss. *ppp* < *p* > *ppp* gliss. *ppp* poco *mf*

\* Play tremolo on inverted Cymbal resting on skin of Timpani.

Takemitsu consistently assigns the different sections of the orchestra different roles. Aside from the solo viola, the woodwind and brass sections are most often assigned to play the dominant lines. The other instruments have more of a “sound effect” purpose, used to either create a shimmering effect or double the parts played by the dominant instruments to add different tone qualities to the phrase. These sound effect instruments include the strings, harp, piano, celesta, and many different kinds of percussion instruments such as vibraphone, glockenspiel, suspended cymbals, gongs, tubular bells, tam-tams, and timpani.

The pan-focal orchestration style and instrumental techniques in *A String Around Autumn* create different shades of tone colors and changes of quality in the sound. Takemitsu credited the influences in style mostly to Debussy but also a good deal to traditional Japanese instruments, which are designed to imitate the sound of nature. For instance, the samisen is able to mimic the sound of a cicada, and the shakuhachi can produce the a sound as if wind is blowing through a decayed bamboo stub.<sup>12</sup> Because of such unusual timbres, Takemitsu explained that traditional Japanese instruments produce a sound that Western listeners may regard as noise.<sup>13</sup> This noise, in Takemitsu’s view, is

<sup>12</sup> Ohtake, 86.

<sup>13</sup> Takemitsu, *Confronting, Silence*, 64.

what sets traditional Japanese instruments apart from the Western instruments, as “Western instruments, in the process of development, sought to eliminate noise.”<sup>14</sup> His instrumental writing thus not only aims to achieve a pan-focal effect but also to imitate the quality of sound of traditional Japanese instruments. Takemitsu himself summarizes his perspective in his essays by noting that

[t]raditional Japanese music has always been extremely sensitive to tone quality. The effort (of creating different timbral spectrum and movement to each note in the melodies) is to perceive such minute differences characterizes both the sensitivity of Debussy and of Japanese music.<sup>15</sup>

#### 4.3 Takemitsu’s “stream of sound” in *A String Around Autumn*

In his own writing, Takemitsu describes an experience he had while riding a subway, where he was aware of all the sounds surrounding him. This sonic awareness inspired Takemitsu’s compositional philosophy, as evidenced by his views that “composing is giving meaning to that *stream of sounds* that penetrates the world we live in” and that music should not be isolated from daily life. Takemitsu was critical of the development of European compositional styles, as he thought that European music (mainly German and Austrian) gradually focused on more systematic and mathematical methods. These strict methods might then limit the composer in searching for the real essence of music. He believes that a composer should let the sound from the world live within the music without any restrictions.<sup>16</sup>

The concept of “stream of sound” thus became one of the main focuses in Takemitsu’s creative world. This philosophy is greatly influenced by the concept of *Ma*

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>16</sup> Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 79-82.

from traditional Japanese culture. The original explanation in Japanese for *Ma* means “space” between two structural parts or “interval” in time and space. Isao Tsujimoto, former director general of The Japan Foundation in New York, further explains *Ma* and its manifestation in Japanese life and culture:

When you see a Japanese Noh theater with Japanese music, there is plenty of *Ma*, plenty of silence. Even in the daily conversation within Japanese, there is a lot of *Ma*. I always sense a big difference between that kind of sense of time of Japanese and westerners, especially Americans. In conversation with American people, you need to keep talking. So people are a little bit afraid of having *Ma* between my talk and your talk. But somehow Japanese people have sense to enjoy that kind of blankness. That kind of notion reflects in every aspect of Japanese, especially traditional, culture.<sup>17</sup>

Takemitsu once commented that it is hard to define the philosophy of *Ma* by one or two simple phrases.<sup>18</sup> To me, however, Tsujimoto’s definition of *Ma* as the sense of time comes closest to explaining the secret of how the concept of *Ma* or “stream of sound” affects the music in *A String Around Autumn*.

In much common-practice, classical Western music, the sense of time is propelled by the construction of the piece and clear-cut phrases that are sometimes defined by functional harmony or indicated by rests. In other words, such music often places emphasis on a concrete form and less on a continuous sense of movement. However, what *Ma* brings to Takemitsu’s music is a unique sense of time, a consistent flow of musical gesture throughout the music. The concept of *Ma* gives a different meaning to the silence in Takemitsu’s music and helps to draw the attention of the audience more closely to the meaning behind the silence. Takemitsu described the essence of the

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<sup>17</sup> Mr. Tsujimoto in an interview talking about “Ma” for an exhibition during Carnegie Hall’s “Japan NYC” festival in 2011. <http://www.carnegiehall.org/Video/Video.aspx?id=4294977320>

<sup>18</sup> Takemitsu, *Afterword*, 9.

silences in his music by noting that “[i]n music, the silence is not the pause, a silence actually has energy, just like we think that the sound has energy, and that is quite connected to Japanese traditional ideas.”<sup>19</sup>

In *A String Around Autumn*, the phrases usually start in a soft dynamic, grow into a louder volume in the middle of the phrase, and eventually decay into the soft dynamic again towards the end (Example 4.3.1).

Example 4.3.1

The image shows a musical score for a string instrument, likely a cello or double bass, in 4/4 time. The score is divided into two systems, labeled A and B. System A starts at measure 6 and ends at measure 9. It begins with a 'poco riten.' marking. The dynamics are marked as *pp* (pianissimo), *mf* (mezzo-forte), *p* (piano), and *mf* (mezzo-forte) again. System B starts at measure 10 and ends at measure 13. It features a variety of dynamics including *f* (forte), *p* (piano), *mf* (mezzo-forte), and *p* (piano). The score includes various musical notations such as rests, notes, and slurs, indicating a continuous flow of music despite the silences.

The phrases are short and usually separated by rests. However, the silence created by the rests does not stop the music from moving forward but is part of the ‘flow’ of the musical gestures. The design of the dynamics allows the phrases to connect with the silence and create a continuous flow. The melodic lines do not have a strong pulse, as they constantly switch from duple to triple rhythms and use complicated sub-division of beats, often with notes being tied over across the barlines (Example 4.3.2).

<sup>19</sup> Alan Hall, *Enter the Garden - A Portrait of Toru Takemitsu* (Falling Tree production for BBC Radio 3, 2008).

### Example 4.3.2

The musical score for Example 4.3.2 is written for a single melodic line and a piano accompaniment. The melodic line begins at measure 18 with a tempo marking of 'a tempo'. It features various dynamic markings including *p*, *[f]*, *p*, *poco mf*, *al niente mp*, and *pp*. The piano accompaniment starts with a *pp* dynamic. The score includes two complex time signatures:  $3.5 \frac{2+1.5}{4}$  and  $6.5 \frac{4+1.5}{4}$ . There are also markings for 'ten.' (tension) and 'poco' (a little). The melodic line includes triplets and a '1' marking above a note.

The passage in Example 4.3.2 shows the frequently changing meters and unusual numbers of beats in a measure ( $3.5/4$  or  $6.5/4$ ). Takemitsu also often indicates for phrases to be performed with a great deal of rubato, typically using the markings of “ $\nearrow$ ” (accelerando) or “ $\searrow$ ” (rallentando) for that purpose (Example 4.3.3).

### Example 4.3.3

The musical score for Example 4.3.3 is written for a single melodic line. It begins with a tempo marking of 'rall.' and a time signature of  $3.5 \frac{4}{4}$ . The score includes a box labeled 'Tempo Freely' and a 'Tempo' marking. There are also markings for 'poco' and 'molto'. The melodic line includes triplets and a '5' marking above a note. The piano accompaniment starts with a *pp* dynamic. The score includes various dynamic markings including *pp*, *[poco]*, *pp*, *[f]*, *pp*, *[poco]*, and *molto*.

The piece’s rhythmic design is assisted by the generally slow tempo. There are two main tempos indicated in the piece: Tempo I is quarter note equals 46 to 52 beats per minute, and Tempo II is even slower, at quarter note equals 32 to 46 beats per minute. Tempo II usually happens together with the appearance of Event E.

Takemitsu once said that “[s]ound is continuous, unbroken movement.”<sup>20</sup> I see this idea of “stream of sound” as the main aesthetic philosophy behind *A String Around Autumn*, based on Takemitsu’s treatment of the dynamics, the rhythms, the tempi, and, lastly, the emphasis on silence. These treatments are carefully planned, allowing the music to avoid having clear pulses or structure that would interrupt the continuous flow of movement. Conductor Oliver Knussen once shared this experience of working with Takemitsu:

When I used to work with him (Takemitsu) on performances, he would be very very picky about exactly how long the silences should be between these little fragments (phrases). It was like how you place flower beds or plants in a garden and then you trace and route around them.<sup>21</sup>

This anecdote shows how much thought Takemitsu put into the planning of the sound in his music in order to best express his philosophical idea of “stream of sound.” Listeners are thus invited to experience a sound world that blends music, one’s surroundings, and silence.

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<sup>20</sup> Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 81.

<sup>21</sup> Hall, *Enter the Garden*.



## Chapter 5: Conclusion

After carefully examining the compositional aspects of *A String Around Autumn*, the strong French “flavor” in the piece is clear through the use of pitch collections and the orchestration influenced by Olivier Messiaen and Claude Debussy. Furthermore, Takemitsu’s Eastern-influenced material, such as pentatonic collections in many of the melodies, harmonies, and tonal centers, does not come from his native Japan as much as from the compositions of French composers, especially Debussy, who often incorporated Eastern styles in composition. Although Takemitsu was mostly self-taught, he regarded Debussy as a compositional mentor, especially with regards to orchestration.<sup>1</sup> Debussy’s well-known fascination with Eastern art also enabled Takemitsu to feel a close connection to the French composer. However, Takemitsu only learned to appreciate traditional Japanese culture much later in life through his encounter with John Cage. Takemitsu described the combined influences of Cage and Debussy on his own appreciation of Eastern material as a “reciprocal action.”<sup>2</sup>

The “French flavor” in *A String Around Autumn* is important in the display of Takemitsu’s French influences and also connected in significant ways to the background of the piece. As mentioned in chapter 1, this piece is dedicated to the Paris Autumn Festival and to the people of France, with special mentions of Debussy and Messiaen, and celebrates the bicentenary of the French Revolution. Therefore, it is not surprising that Takemitsu would compose the piece in such fashion as to show his gratitude towards important influences on his compositional life.

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<sup>1</sup> Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 110.

<sup>2</sup> Ohtake, 12.

Even with the many Western influences in Takemitsu's compositions, *A String Around Autumn* is still set apart from compositions of Western composers through influences of traditional Japanese culture that create the piece's prevailing aesthetic. Conductor Marin Alsop describes the qualities in Takemitsu's music that make it unique:

I might mistake it (Takemitsu's music) for Debussy. I think that's the closest connection for me of a very impressionistic kind of approach, but at the same time, it's more contemporary, and more sparse. I think that's where the Eastern elements come in. It's like one of those incredible miniatures that the Japanese create. Absolutely every detail is there for a reason, and even if we don't understand it as Westerner, we can appreciate that everything has a significance.<sup>3</sup>

Making a great deal out of every single subject in the music—the Eastern elements that Alsop perceived in Takemitsu's compositions are unmistakably related to the influences from traditional Japanese culture. The concept of *Ma*, which Alsop perceived as sparseness, is one of the traditional elements that inspired Takemitsu to embrace silence in his music. Another influence on his style, as discussed in chapter 1, is his admiration and passion for traditional Japanese gardens, which he himself often discussed in his writings<sup>4</sup> or interviews<sup>5,6</sup> and which other musicians who worked with him have discussed as well. Film maker Peter Grilli, who was a friend of Takemitsu, described how Japanese gardens are important in the process of Takemitsu's music making:

[W]hen he (Takemitsu) would get a commission, one of the first things he would do would be to go to one of his favorite Japanese gardens in Kyoto or somewhere else, and pace through that garden for 20 minutes. If the piece was to be for 20 minutes, he assigned himself 20 minutes and would

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<sup>3</sup> Hall, *Enter the Garden*.

<sup>4</sup> Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence*, 95.

<sup>5</sup> Hall, *Enter the Garden*.

<sup>6</sup> Takemitsu, *A Memoir of Toru Takemitsu*.

walk around the garden for the amount of time, observing and feeling the very physical phenomena in the garden, such as rocks, trees, and ponds. And he would use them as part of his sketch pad for the piece.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the objects from the gardens, he also tried to capture the emotions that one might feel in the garden, and these emotions had become the expressive and sentimental components in his music. Takemitsu mentioned that

When I write a piece of music, I note on the score, a sort of emotion I have in mind, I may think that a piece of music about a garden should be calm and still, but at the same time, it should be a strong calm, so I say: ecstatic. One might think you can't combine the two—calm and ecstasy, but there are moments in the Japanese garden that are very still and restful. But something intensely sensual, almost erotic, is going on at the same time.<sup>8</sup>

The gardens provided both a source of inspiration and a metaphor for his music. Takemitsu explained that

I can imagine a garden superimposed over the image of an orchestra. A garden is composed of various different elements and sophisticated details that converge to form a harmonious whole. Each element does not exert its individuality, but achieves a state of anonymity –and that is the kind of music that I would like to create.<sup>9</sup>

The ideas Takemitsu learned from the gardens for his compositions, such as the way to plant the objects in his music, the movements and sound of the nature, and the contrasting emotions created by the calmness and sensuality, add together to form a unique style attractive to listeners, including myself.

*A String Around Autumn* is a good example of incorporating this garden-influenced philosophy. The “events” in the piece represent the “objects” from the

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<sup>7</sup> Hall, *Enter the Garden*.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

surroundings lining up in a spiral shaped formal design. The designs and placements of the phrases and the silences—the “stream of sound”— and the extended instrumental techniques imitating the Japanese traditional instruments are designed to capture the sounds of nature. Moreover, all of these effects are achieved by using the French influenced compositional techniques, and this is where Takemitsu shows how adeptly he merges the worlds of East and West.

Takemitsu died in 1996, and the musical combination of East and West is one of his biggest contributions. Violists in particular benefit the most from his compositional activity—besides *A String Around Autumn*, his works for viola include *And then I knew 'twas wind* for flute, viola, and harp (1992), and *A Bird Came down the Walk* for viola and piano (1994). The violist who premiered these pieces was none other than the world-renowned Japanese violist, Nobuko Imai, who was a friend of Takemitsu. On one occasion, I had an opportunity to speak with Ms. Imai about *A String Around Autumn* and Takemitsu, and she shared with me that Takemitsu was actually very fond of the music written by Johannes Brahms and Robert Schumann. The expressive quality in the melodies of these composers’ music touched him deeply, especially the second movement of Brahms *Viola Sonata No. 1 in F Minor*, Op. 120, No. 1 (1894), which inspired him to write pieces for viola. Even though I argue that French compositional styles were the most important European influences on Takemitsu, the quality of expressiveness or sensitivity, no matter the source, drew Takemitsu’s attention. In fact, this quality can be regarded as the common language between the East and West, as is evident in Takemitsu’s interpretation of the metaphor of Japanese gardens and the Western music he admired. What Takemitsu brought to music was a focus on that

common language and a new expressiveness, a focus that, for Takemitsu, has the simplicity of a stroll through a garden.

Sink  
don't sing.

Be simply  
silent.

Be simple:  
a string  
to wind around

Autumn.

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